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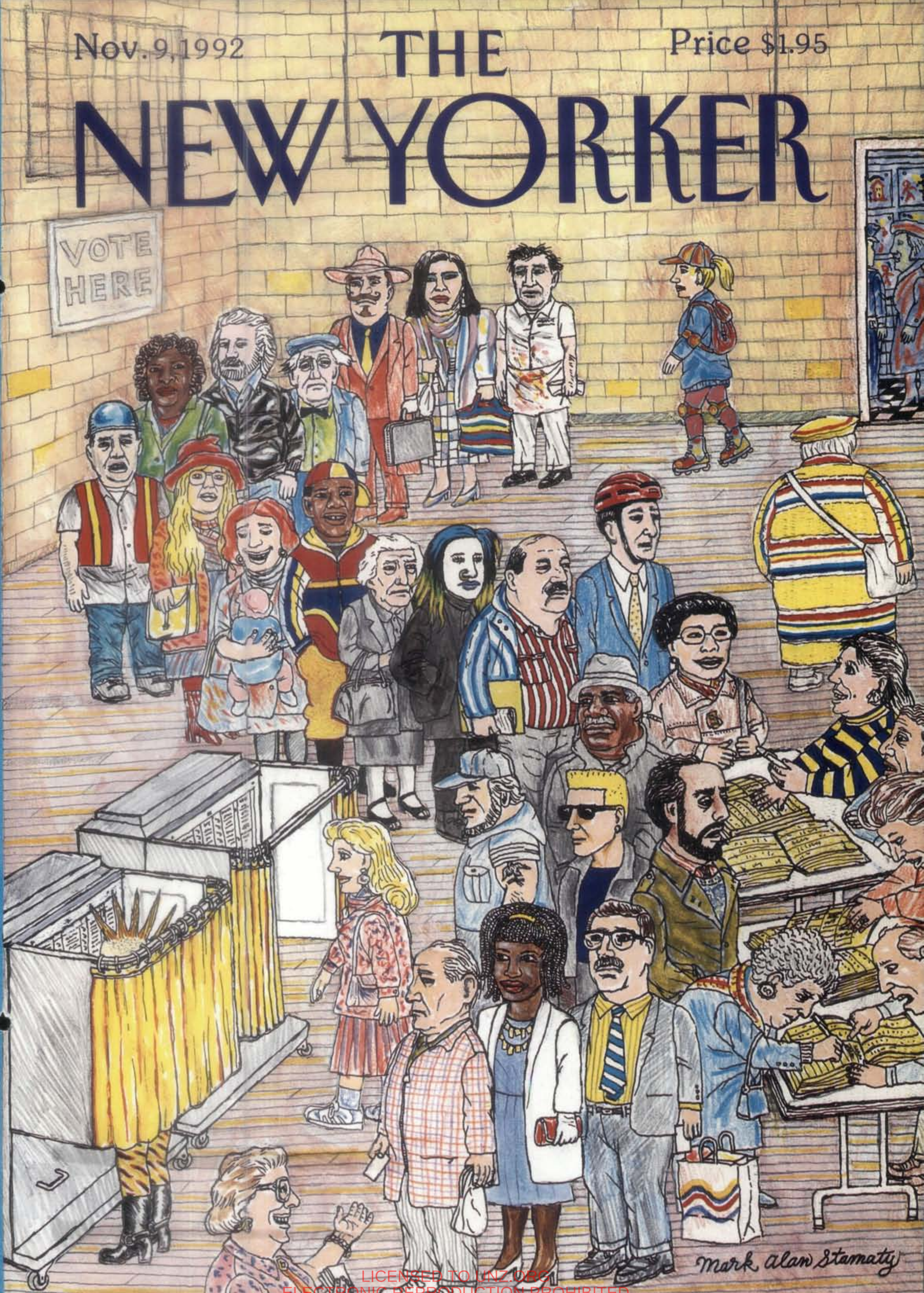
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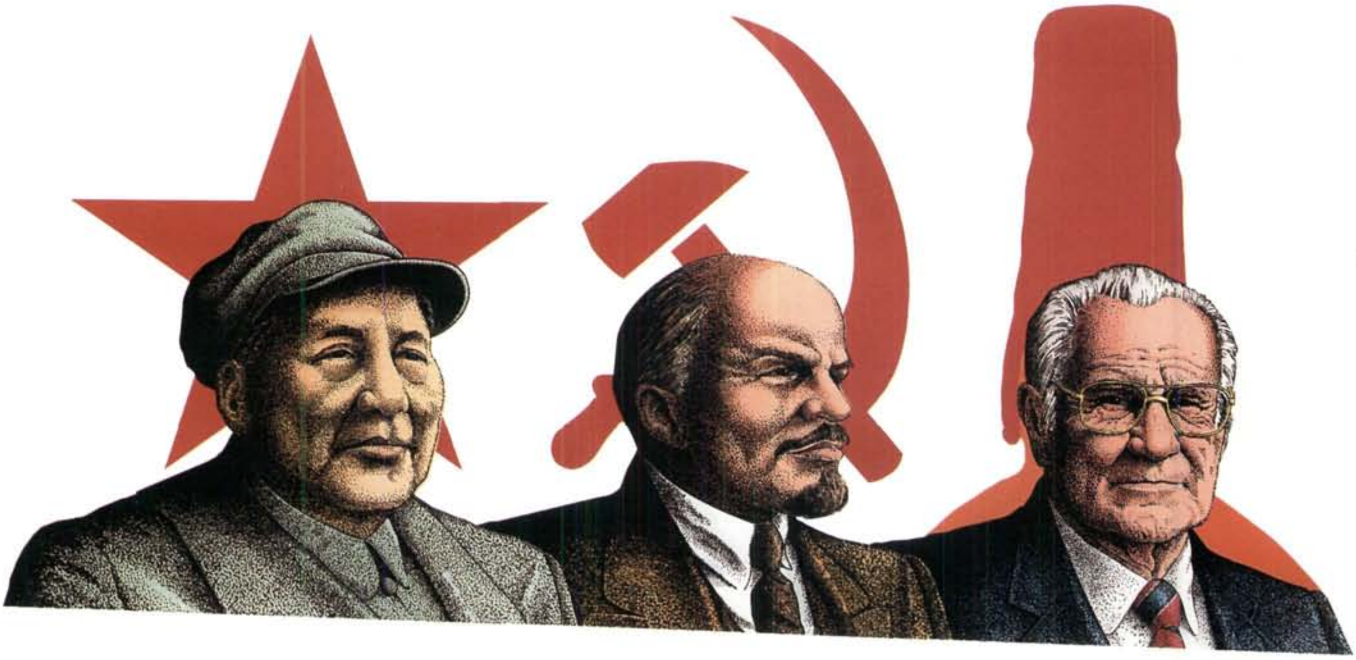

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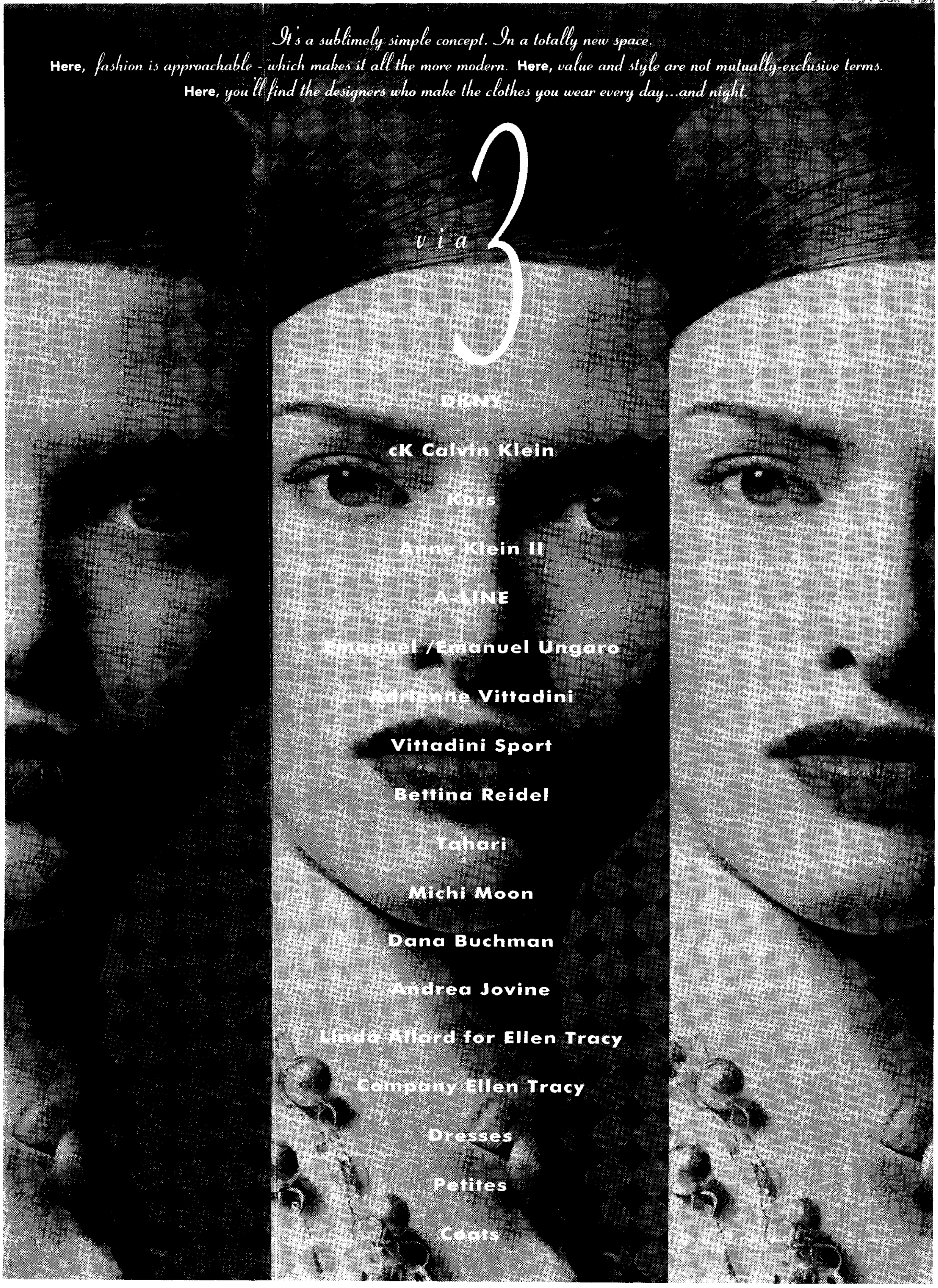

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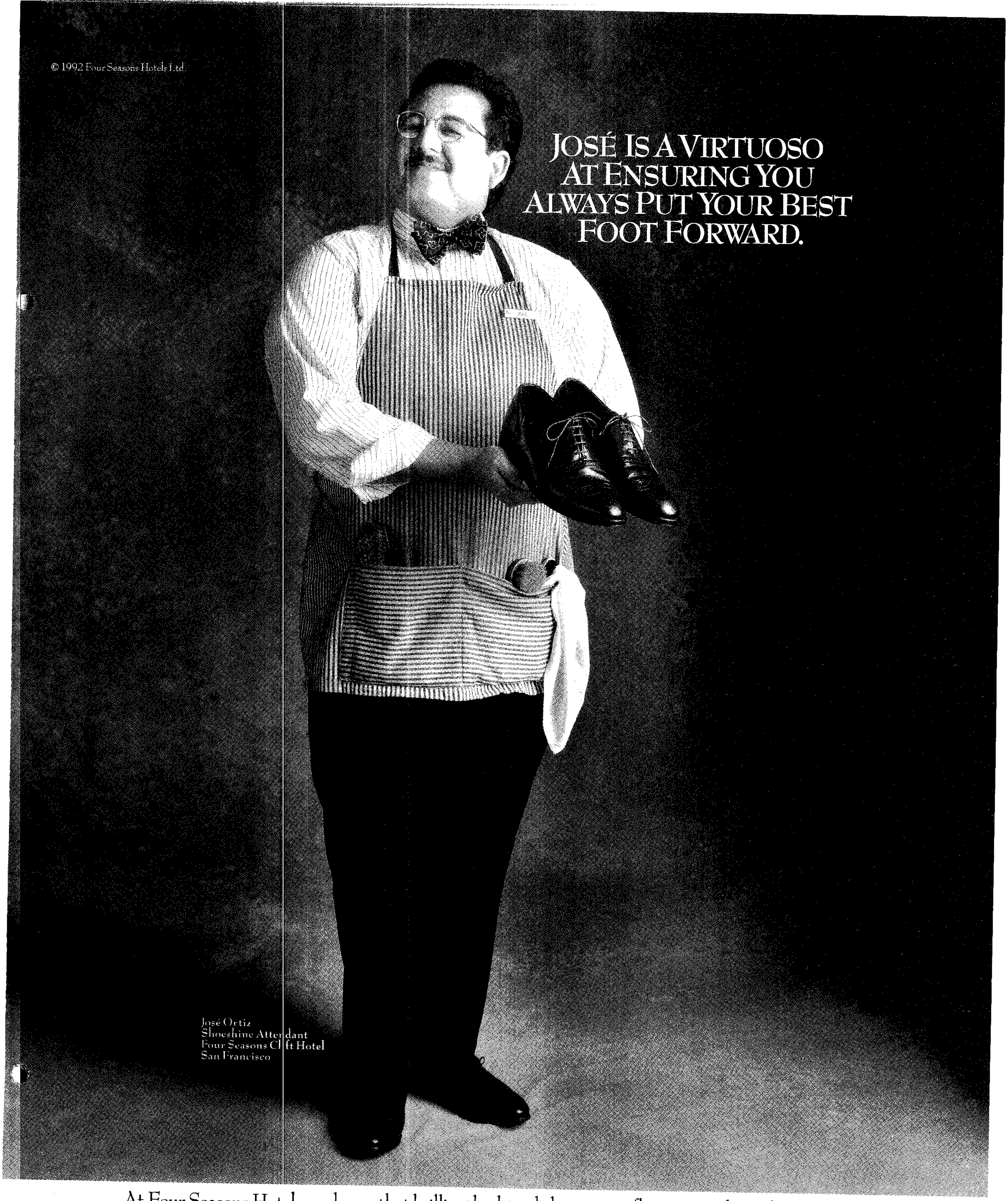
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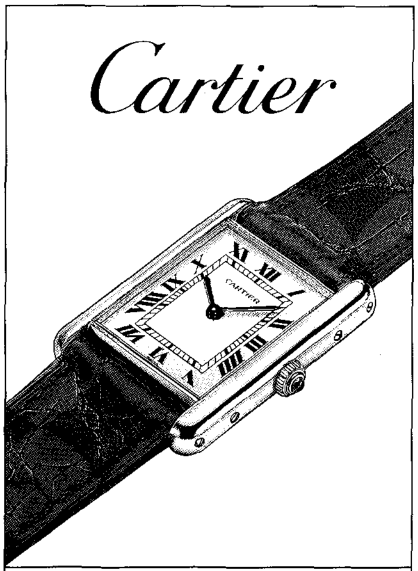

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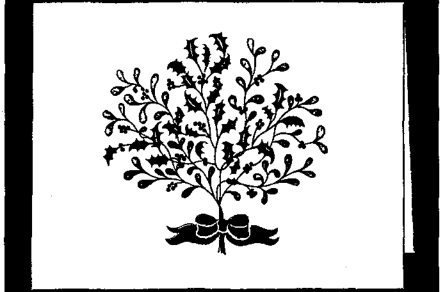

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COMMENT

GENERATION OF CHANGE

STUDENTS took to the streets all over the world in the late nineteen-sixties, and out of the marching ranks of those long-ago demonstrations have come a number of leaders of today. The most famous of these is still probably Vaclav Havel, who was active in the radical cultural scene of that time and in his country's rebellion against the Soviets in 1968, and used those experiences to guide Czechoslovakia's transition to democracy in 1989. Things haven't gone so well for Havel since then. But something about the man—his greatness of spirit, his cleverness and decency—suggests that more is to come, and that he and his generation have not had their last say.

Another of the leaders with a background in the '68 generation, though he might not give that impression, is Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the President of Mexico. Salinas was never a militant protester. But the horrifying Tlatelolco massacre of the fall of 1968, which suppressed the movement that did protest, cemented a bond among the students of the day. Among those students, Salinas is the one who has come to power. He has allowed Mexico a little more democracy—though only a little, which is discouraging. But the Salinas presidency still has a couple of years to go, and a trace of the old idealism has never quite disappeared, and we will have to see.

The most successful of the national leaders to emerge from the sixties student movement is Felipe González, the Prime Minister of Spain. González made a name for himself in the anti-Franco underground of the late sixties, and when Franco died and Spain turned to democracy González, still in his thirties, emerged quickly as the country's natural leader. He has occupied the prime ministership for ten years, and is Spain's most popular politician to this day. Of course, he encounters some severe criticism, much of it from friends and allies in his own Socialist Party, who feel that González has sold his left-wing soul to the capitalist market.

Yet Spain and democracy have prospered under Felipe González, and if he *has* gone too far in market directions (as his critics say), this was always part of his approach anyway. For the whole spirit of the '68 generation, in Spain and everywhere

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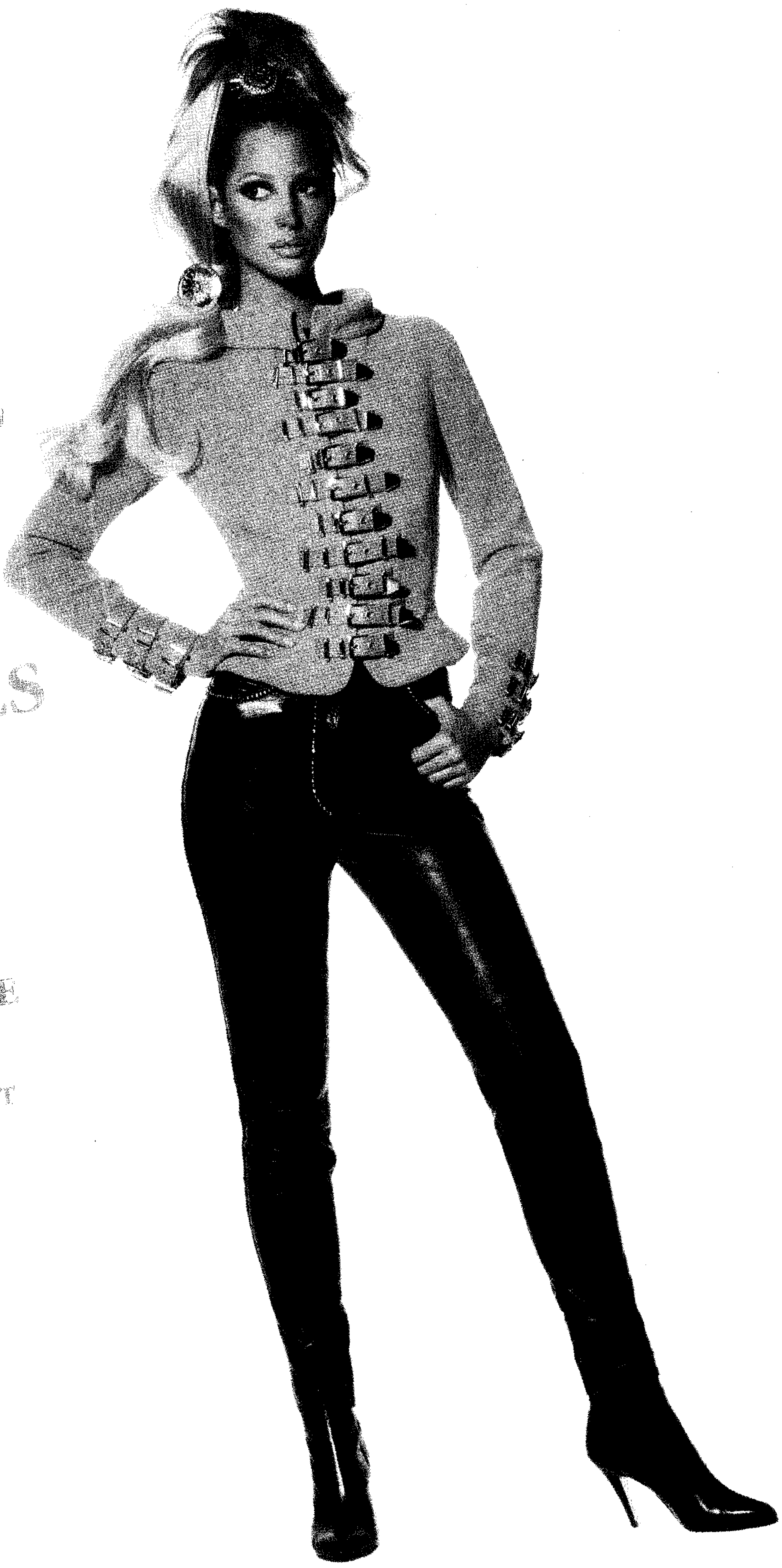

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else, was to get rid of the old orthodoxies, right and left, and to shake things up. Every one of the world leaders who came out of those long-ago student movements has had that intention, and each of them has achieved a smaller or larger part of that grand generational program.

Like Havel, Salinas, and González, Bill Clinton was a genuine participant in the student atmosphere of the late sixties. He may not have inhaled marijuana (his old friends believe him on this point, actually), but he breathed the spirit of the time. He played his small but honorable role in organizing opposition to the war in Vietnam. Yet even as a very young man Clinton seems to have recognized that in its American version sixties student idealism, half ruined by errors and enthusiasms, needed a shakeup of its own. In 1972, he worked in George McGovern's campaign; but he seems to have seen right away that McGovern's lack of realism guaranteed the most dismal of failures.

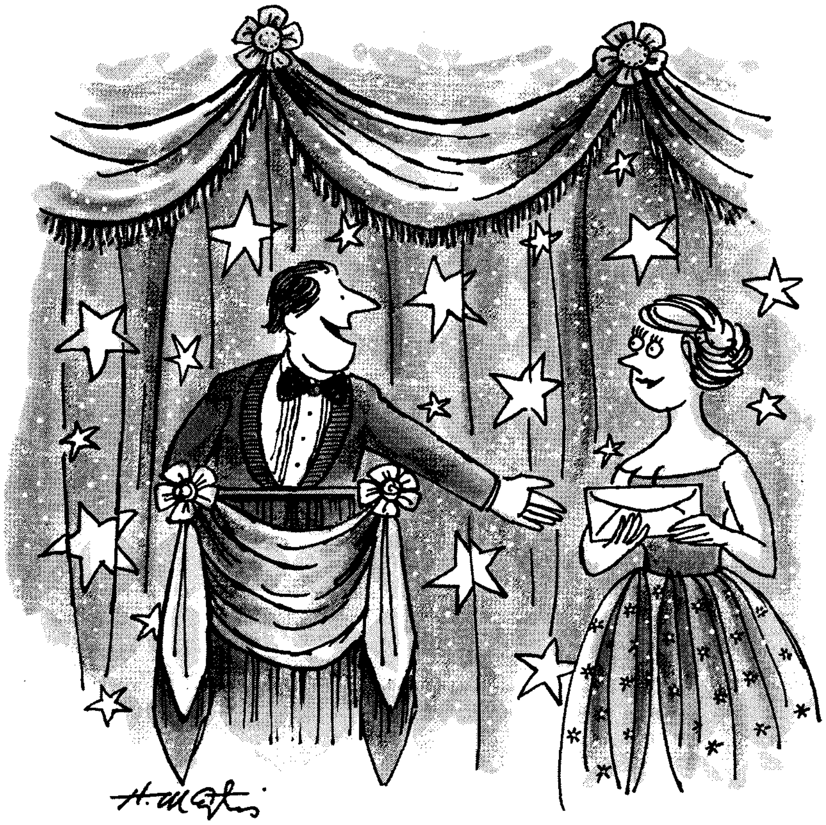
Clinton's decision to go into politics in the un-McGovernite state of Arkansas would have obliged him to take such errors and failures seriously, even if he had not been so inclined. But he was so inclined, and always had been. The protests he helped mount were nonviolent and responsible; and his now famous letter to Colonel Eugene Homes fairly vibrates with respect for democratic values and for civility in general. Even so, Clinton's return from Oxford and Yale to Little Rock meant making a clear break with student life and protest politics. It meant starting anew—and that is why, many years later, when his political enemies raked up his past, his student activities seemed a faintly scandalous revelation.

Like González of Spain, Clinton of Arkansas was a political boy wonder. But the Arkansas wonder, defeated for reëlection after one term in the statehouse, found he had more to learn about maintaining coalitions large enough to govern. So he worked still harder at making his political ideals and ambitions attractive to the mainstream, and not just to the margins. He did it on the state level; and in the Democratic primaries this year he did it on the national level. Naturally, his insistence on appealing to the majority excited, during the primary campaign, opposition from some who saw him as an enemy of the sorts of reform that only political minorities will support. Clinton found himself assailed precisely as Prime Minister González has been assailed. But González didn't waver, and neither did Clinton.

President Bush's harping on Clinton's student politics and struggles with the draft was, then, an effort to saddle Clinton with the very errors and excesses he has battled against all his adult life. But there was perhaps a genuine political content lurking in those attacks, and even in the hair-raising oratory against homosexuals and professional women which dominated the Republican Convention in Houston last August. For Bush and the Republicans further to his right presented the election as a referendum on the reform spirit of the sixties as a whole—not only on the errors and excesses that Clinton has spent his career opposing but also on the aspects that Clinton favored, on the spirit of egalitarianism and tolerance and the willingness to innovate.

It was the generational aspect of the 1992 election that sparked a certain very cautious excitement around the Clinton campaign. The excitement came from the expectation that, for the first time, the spirit of those Americans who were young in the sixties might at last, in the matured and revised version that Clinton has devoted himself to creating, rule and not rail. It came from the expectation that ideas and instincts that have always been on the defensive—the instincts for policy innovation, for greater tolerance of diverse personal styles, for more altruism in government at home and abroad—might now have their day. The excitement came from expecting that, like Spain and other places that are young democracies, America, too, the oldest and greatest of the democracies (but, because of its age, a little creaky in the bones), will at last have its time of youth and energy and growth.

The election, as these lines are being written, still lies ahead, and the curse of Thomas Dewey prevents any prediction beyond this: The future that Bill Clinton represents is the rise to power of a generation that was formed by the idealism of the nineteen-sixties. Either this future is upon us now or, if the majority for change proves fatally divided, it will be upon us in a few years. For there is an iron law of generational succession. These transitions can be delayed only so long. ♦



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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

Camping Out

ANYONE who has wondered just how well Everett Quinton has stewarded the Ridiculous Theatrical Company since the death of his partner, Charles Ludlam, in 1987, should try to get tickets to the company's production of Georg Osterman's "Brother Truckers." It's true that this play about three men in the trash-carting business is a good half hour too long and that many of its verbal punches don't quite land, but when you trundle down to One Sheridan Square you expect to groan at a lot of one-liners. Excess is part of the fun.

There's nothing inappropriately excessive, though, in Quinton's performance as Lyla Balskin, a woman on the verge, any more than there was in the toughest turns of Quinton's role models here—Barbara Stanwyck and Bette Davis and, especially, Ida Lupino. Lyla's a bitch, but you root for her. She did, after all, make the most human of errors: instead of marrying the man of her dreams (the suitably bland Grant Neale), she chose a man with money (the Frank Morgan-like Eureka). She spends most of the evening resisting her husband's advances (He: "Let's strip down to our smiles"; She: "I'd rather go to Hell in a paper dress") and ruing his prodigious consumption of booze. Lyla herself imbibes less, except for a moment when, in a piece of business that's already become a classic, she dumps Scotch and ice into a blender. Tossing back the results, Quinton is, in every sense, slammin'.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

A . . . My Name Is Still Alice—A sequel to the 1984 musical revue "A . . . My Name Is Alice." Conceived and directed by Joan Micklin Silver and Julianne Boyd. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Anyone Can Whistle—A limited benefit engagement of the 1964 musical by Stephen Sondheim and Arthur Laurents. Opens Nov. 4 at 8, and runs through Nov. 22. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 279-4200.)

Cambodia Agonistes—A music-theatre work by Ernest Abuba and Louis Stewart, which opens the season for Pan Asian Rep. Preview on Nov. 3. Opens Nov. 4 at 8, and runs through Nov. 28. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660.)

Camp Paradox—A play by Barbara Graham that is set at a girls' camp in 1963. Preview on Nov. 3. Opens Nov. 4 at 8, and runs through Nov. 22. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Dog Logic—A dark comedy by Thomas Strelich, with Darrell Larson, Lois Smith, Karen Young, and Joe Clancy. Previews through Nov. 7. Opens Nov. 8 at 3. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

Joined at the Head—A play by Catherine Butterfield. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

My Favorite Year—A new musical based on the movie of the same name; the book is by Joseph Dougherty, the score is by Stephen Flaherty, and the lyrics are by Lynn Ahrens. Evan Pappas, Tim Curry, and Lainie Kazan have the leads. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

On the Bum—Cynthia Nixon plays an unemployed actress on the road in this comedy by Neal Bell, which is set in the Depression. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Othello—Clinton Turner Davis has directed this production of Shakespeare's play, which stars Raphael Nash as the Moor. Arnie Burton is Iago. In previews. (Pearl, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708.)

Program for Murder—A thriller by George W. George and Jeff Travers. Previews begin Nov. 4. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 982-5800.)

The Sheik of Avenue B—A Jewish ragtime and jazz-era musical revue conceived and written by Isaiah Sheffer. In previews. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824.)

The Show-Off—The Roundabout Theatre Company's production of George Kelly's 1924 comedy, with Pat Carroll, Boyd Gaines, Laura Esterman, and Sophie Hayden. Previews Nov. 3-4. Opens Nov. 5 at 7. (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Solitary Confinement—Stacy Keach stars in a thriller by Rupert Holmes. Previews through Nov. 7. Opens Nov. 8 at 6:45. (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 307-4100.)

Three Shouts from a Hill—The O'Casey Theatre Company presents three one-act comedies by Sean O'Casey: "The End of the Beginning," "A Pound on Demand," and "Bedtime Story." The cast includes Risteard Cooper, Pauline Flanagan, Gerard McSorley, and Madeleine Potter. Preview on Nov. 3. Opens Nov. 4 at 7, and runs through Nov. 14. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

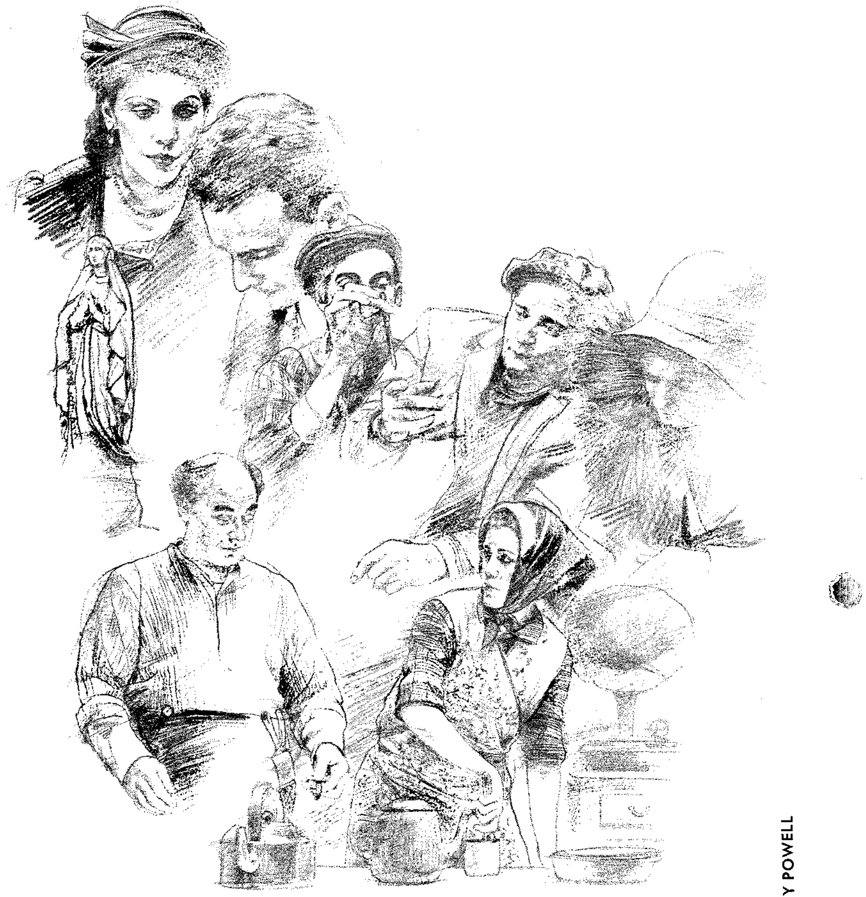
OPENED RECENTLY

The Best of Forbidden Broadway—This tenth-anniversary edition of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running, ever-fluctuating musical revue is, as one might expect, a treat. There is some new material, but the sharpest sequences are still the spoof of "M. Butterfly" and the "Speed-the-Plow" number, "Madonna's Brain," in which David Mamet and Ron Silver try to teach Madonna to act and she ends up tearing off most of her clothes. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/4/92.) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Brother Truckers—The Ridiculous Theatrical Company presents a new comedy by Georg Osterman. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Sq. 691-2271.)

Bubbe Meises, Bubbe Stories—A musical in which a granddaughter recalls her grandmothers and their stories. Written by, and starring, Ellen Gould. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

Conversations with My Father—If you're looking for a totally satisfying theatrical experience, try the new Herb Gardner, a bittersweet memory play about a Lower East Side barkeep, his two sons, and the patrons of his tavern. Staged by Daniel Sullivan, with a cast led by the wonderful Judd Hirsch. (4/13/92) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)



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THE THEATRE–Cont'd

The Destiny of Me—A new play by Larry Kramer. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Falsettos—This back-to-back revival of "March of the Falsettos" and "Falsettoland," two of William Finn's three one-act musicals about a childish, self-absorbed man who leaves his wife and son for his not very nice male lover, is strictly for those who care. The appeal of Mr. Finn's trilogy has always been puzzling. It has a chronology as complicated as the Oedipus cycle and a dramatic sensibility akin to that of the Oresteia. But it has always seemed like banality set to music: shallow, unlikable people expressing themselves in shallow, unlikable songs. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Five Guys Named Moe—The guys are black dancers and singers of ability and spirit, who perform the songs (either lyrics or music or both) of the late Louis Jordan, among them "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying," "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," and "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?" This London import makes a merry evening. (4/20/92) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)—Cherry Jones has the lead in a comedy by Ann-Marie MacDonald. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes Nov. 22.)

Guys and Dolls—A lively production of Frank Loesser's perfect musical, under the direction of Jerry Zaks. Nathan Lane and Faith Prince are the leading guy and doll, and Tony Walton designed the stunning scenery. (4/27/92) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Irish Repertory Theatre Company—A return engagement of two one-man shows, presented in rotating repertory: **JOYICITY,** based on the writings of James Joyce (through Nov. 21), and **FRANKLY BRENDAN,** taken from the works of Brendan Behan and Frank O'Connor (through Nov. 22). (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris—A revival of the musical put together from the works of M. Brel by Eric Blau and Mort Shuman. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Three works in rotating repertory: **UNDER MILK WOOD,** by Dylan Thomas (through Nov. 20); **AN OLD ACTRESS IN THE ROLE OF DOSTOYEVSKY'S WIFE,** by the Russian playwright Edvard Radzinsky (through Nov. 13); and **THE CARETAKER,** by Harold Pinter. Alma H. Law translated the Radzinsky work. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Jelly's Last Jam—The music of Jelly Roll Morton, self-proclaimed inventor of jazz, and, at the same time, an unsparing delineation of Morton himself. The show, an original if there ever was one, was written and directed by George C. Wolfe. In the starring role, Gregory Hines combines his astonishing talents as tap dancer and actor; Savion Glover, who plays the character as a young man, is worthy of him, which is saying a lot. Also present are Keith David, Tonya Pinkins, Wayne Mathis, and Mary Bond Davis. (5/11/92) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Jewish Repertory Theatre—Presenting a revival of **GOD OF VENGEANCE,** Stephen Fife's adaptation of a play by Sholem Asch. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Juno—A revival of the 1959 Marc Blitzstein-Joseph Stein musical. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes Nov. 15.)

The Lament for Arthur Cleary—Jenny Conroy and David Herlihy in the New York première of a 1989 play by Dermot Bolger. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

Mad Forest—A cast of eleven accomplished American actors re-create British playwright Caryl Churchill's examination of the effect of the fall of the Ceausescu regime on two Romanian families from different social strata. Repression and resignation feature in equal parts in Churchill's well-researched and well-written drama. Superbly staged by Mark Wing-Davey, who first created the piece in 1990, the production is elegant, minimal, and unforgettable. (10/26/92) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Closes Nov. 29.)

The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me—A play written and performed by David Drake. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 564-8038.)

Nothing Sacred—George F. Walker's version of Turgenev's "Fathers and Sons." (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 645-1242. Closes Nov. 21.)

Oleanna—William H. Macy and Rebecca Pidgeon in a new play written and directed by David Mamet. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 307-4100.)

Remembrance—Set in Belfast, Graham Reid's absorbing and often entertaining play tells the story of a man and a woman—he a Protestant and she a Catholic, and both of them widowed and in their sixties—who meet regularly at a cemetery (each there to mourn a son who was a victim of the current "troubles") and who slowly fall in love. They are both beset by grown children who, in different ways, raise hell. The action is a matter of brief scenes, some of them quite funny. Milo O'Shea and Frances Sternhagen can seldom have been better than they are in the leading roles, and they are ably supported by Mia Dillon, Caroleen Feeney, John Finn, and Terry Donnelly. Terence Lamude directed. (10/12/92) (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 967-9077.)

The Roads to Home—In three short acts that are more triptych than play, Horton Foote depicts three gentlewomen of Houston, all of them thwarted or otherwise wounded, and one of them mad. Jean Stapleton, Rochelle Oliver, and Hallie Foote appear in the leading roles. All of them are good, and they are well supported (theatrically speaking) by Michael Hadge, William Alderson, and Emmett O'Sullivan-Moore, among others. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. Closes Nov. 8.)

Ruthless!—This camp musical about a monster child star is harmless and amusing enough—assuming you can stomach the little girl. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 254-5076.)

The Sisters Rosensweig—Wendy Wasserstein's new play, with Jane Alexander, Madeline Kahn, and Frances McDormand. (11/2/92) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Spic-O-Rama—John Leguizamo's latest one-man show. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

A Suffering Colonel—A farce written by Kenneth Lonergan and directed by Matthew Broderick. (Naked Angels, 114 W. 17th St. 727-0012. Closes Nov. 7.)

Texts for Nothing—Bill Irwin in an adaptation of Samuel Beckett's "Texts for Nothing" and "How It Is." Adapted by Joseph Chaikin and Steven Kent. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

LONG RUNS

BEAU JEST: Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATSKILLS ON BROADWAY:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400. . . . **LOST IN YONKERS:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **NUNSENSE:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE SECRET GARDEN:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.

DANCE

Ballet Manqué

When dancegoers from out of town visit the city, one of the places they try to hit is the Dance Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, at Lincoln Center. If they had dropped in on a recent Saturday afternoon, here is some of what they would have found:

1) Six of the fifteen video stations in use, five of them showing ballet tapes;

2) Four people reading magazines, all turned to articles about the ballet;

3) Two people looking at books and photographs on ballet subjects and taking notes;

4) One person looking at the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ballet prints in the Dance Collection's current exhibition, titled "A New World Look at Old World Dance";

5) A shelf of miscellaneous pamphlets and circulars of interest to local dancers. That shelf contained: an announcement of a new publication devoted to Renaissance and Baroque keyboard dances; a notice seeking a female partner "for vigorous preparation to audition" at American Ballroom Theatre; a card itemizing the avant-garde performance events this fall at Dia Center for the Arts; a pamphlet for artists about making out one's will in the age of AIDS; and a circular addressed to "Ballet Choreographers" about an event next February called "Ballet Builders Showcase," sponsored by a group called New Choreographers on Point.

There was not a single live ballet performance to be seen that week—or this—in New York.

Paul Taylor Dance Company—Final performances of the engagement. Nov. 3 at 8: "Junction," "Duet," "Fact & Fancy," and "Andalusian Green.". . . ¶ Nov. 4 at 8 and Nov. 7 at 2: "Oz," "Fact & Fancy," and "Company B.". . . ¶ Nov. 5 at 8: "Junction," "Epic," "Lost, Found, and Lost," and "Syzygy.". . . ¶ Nov. 6 at 8: "Counterswarm," "Musical Offering," and "Oz.". . . ¶ Nov. 7 at 8 and Nov. 8 at 7:30: "Andalusian Green," "Lost, Found, and Lost," and "Company B.". . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 3: "Syzygy," "Private Domain," and "Oz." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

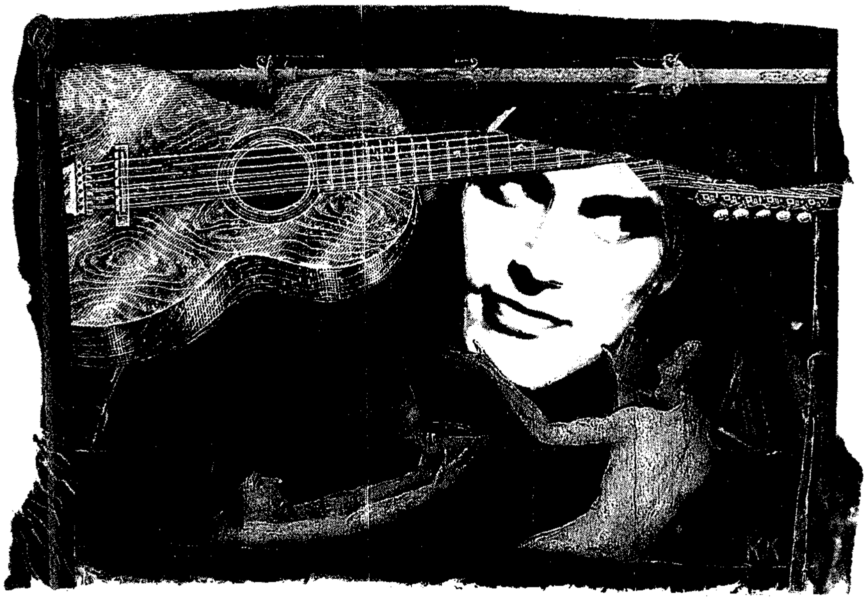
Takarazuka Revue Company—An all-female dance troupe from Japan; with guest artist Mizuki Aura. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 4 at 7:30; Nov. 5-[illegible] at 8; Nov. 7 and Nov. 11 at 2 and 8; and Nov. 8 at 2 and 7. Through Nov. 15.)

Creach/Koester—An all-male six-member troupe. (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Nov. 4 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

Linda Mancini—In "Good As It Gets." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Nov. 4-7 at 8 and Nov. 8 at 3.)

Judith Ren-Lay—"Foot/Tongue/Web," an evening-long work. Presented by Danspace Project. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Nov. 5-8 at 8:30.)

Yvonne Meier—In "The Shining," a dance/performance installation. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Nov. 7-9 at 9 and 11 and Nov. 11 at 9. Through Nov. 15.)



John Wesley Harding

KARI KROLL

NIGHT LIFE

Kicking Back

A COUPLE of years back, a rock critic described John Wesley Harding as "a talented new British singer/songwriter with an Elvis Costello/Billy Bragg-type voice, who writes exceptional 'Dylan with the Band'-era sounding folk/pop/rock songs." Harding himself is more blunt. He calls his music "folk noir," and jokes, "All my songs are intensely depressing. Everybody is unhappy, and everybody dies."

Harding, who will perform at the Bottom Line on November 6, just released "Why We Fight," which is his best record by a hop, a skip, and a jump. The twenty-six-year-old singer has always been a first-rate songwriter—his lyrics are smart and acerbic, and their meaning seems to depend on how the light hits them. Still, Harding has never before sounded this self-assured, whether the subject is love on the wane or fascism on the rise. " 'Why We Fight' is the first record I can listen to without wincing," he admits. "The other albums could be called 'Fun in the Studio, Volumes I and II.' With those records, we basically thought that the songs were so strong they could stand anything."

Onstage, Harding is wonderfully irreverent, and he's also a master of that dying art known as taking requests. (At the Bottom Line, he will perform a solo segment, as well as one with a band.) Harding has been called a protest singer, and that makes sense, because his career can be taken as one big protest against the banality of pop music. But he never preaches, though he does occasionally succumb to a lesser evil: "Sometimes," he says, "I catch myself being too entertaining."

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out some of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—The torch singer **ANDREA MARCOVICCI** has a sublease on the Oak Room for the next few months. Through Nov. 7, she'll be offering a program called "Just Kern"; on Nov. 10, she begins "Movies and Other Love Songs." Shows at nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A sleek, green-walled room with brass railings and mounted O'Keeffian animal skulls. Look closer and you'll find that the skulls are wearing earrings. After the show, be sure to check out the adjoining restaurant/tapas bar, which looks like the indoor food market of your dreams. **BONNIE FRANKLIN** appears in Judith Viorst's revue "Love and Shrimp" beginning Nov. 3. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, and Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen. Closed Mondays.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A busy jazz club, with a busy gift shop. **DIANE SCHUUR** begins work on Nov. 3. Ms. Schuur, a Seattle-based pianist and singer, has been gaining ground in jazz circles since the early eighties. She's a versatile musician, comfortable in jazz, blues, R. & B., and pop. In performance, she infuses everything she plays with a strong rhythmic pulse, and she likes to connect with her audience. Her rap is a disarming combination of uplift, romantic advice, and bawdy jokes. **FOURPLAY**, featuring Bob James and Lee Ritenour, begins a stint on Nov. 10. Music from nine. Dining.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—This big, airy folk-and-rock club tends to be the site of a lot of music-industry bashes. If you have trouble getting tickets to the early show, it's usually because some record company has bought the place out. The atmosphere here, as a result, can be a bit weird: the record-company types have to have fun, because their own artists are onstage, but they can't have too much fun, because their bosses are watching. The later shows, though they're not as well attended and though they tend to run late, are much looser in spirit. **LOREENA MC KENNITT** performs on Nov. 4; **JOHN WESLEY HARDING** is in on Nov. 6; and **ANNIE HASLAM** claims Nov. 7. Shows times vary. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

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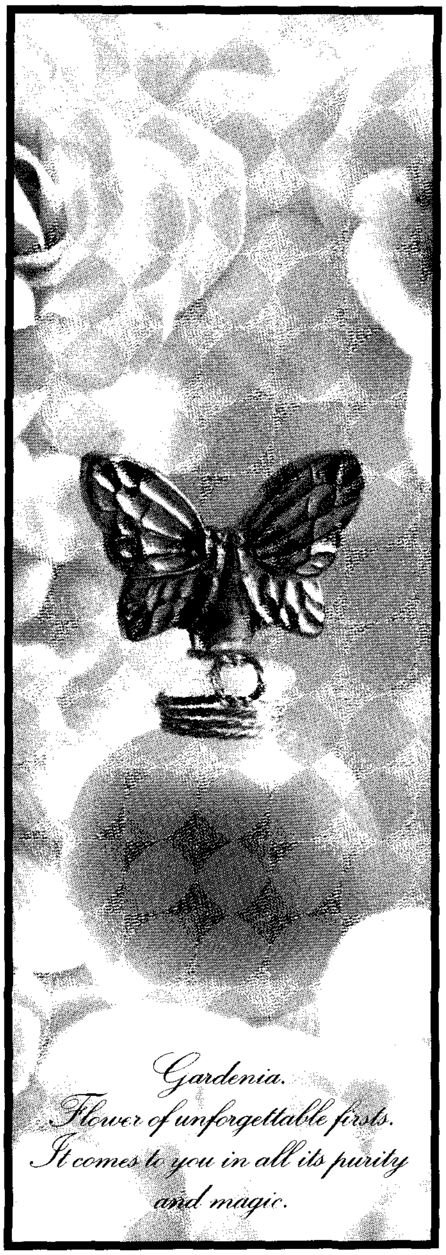
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NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Next door, there's a bustling, garishly lit market. Within the narrow walls of this venerable piano-and-bass preserve, however, everything is easy on the eyes and ears. The **DONALD BROWN** quartet, featuring vibist Steve Nelson, is in action through Nov. 7. **GARY BARTZ, JOHN HICKS,** and **PETER WASHINGTON** get started on Nov. 9. Music from ten. Dining.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small, peach-walled storefront, Sin-é is usually given over to a young, earthy crowd that drinks Rolling Rock or café au lait and waits for some Irish musician or other to blow in and play a set. The café doesn't have a schedule per se, so it's often after the fact that one hears that some great Irish rocker has made a stop here. A frustrating state of affairs, perhaps, but one can have fun just hoping, waiting, and watching the door. Music generally begins at about eight-thirty.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is home to **BOBBY SHORT** Tuesdays through Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-forty-five. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano from nine-forty-five Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—The city's most famed rock club—a dark, narrow cave with neon-beer-sign stalactites and ancestral graffiti—is part sacred burial ground and part historic landmark, but it hasn't succumbed to nostalgia: new and used bands of every stripe continue to pass through nightly. Music from eight on Sundays and Mondays, from eight-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Club 53, Sixth Ave. at 53rd St. (261-5853)—A new cabaret in the New York Hilton. It's a pleasantly lulling spot, where you can sink into deep sofas and eat off of big plates. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at eight-forty-five, Fridays and Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-forty-five.

Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. (989-9319)—In the basement of this tucked-away Village restaurant-bar is a narrow, white-brick-walled room, with a few tables and steampipes, where you'll find music, readings, and theatre-of-the-cramped. The restaurant itself is a wine-and-candlelight neighborhood café; downstairs, there's a sixties-coffeehouse aesthetic at work.

Dan Lynch, 221 Second Ave., at 14th St. (677-0911)—As uninviting a hole-in-the-wall as you're likely to find. This blues bar is dingy, depressingly lit, and located on a block straight out of a Gus Van Sant movie. In the world of blues, however, this spells authenticity, and the bands here are often worth the trouble. Music from ten nightly.

Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St. (924-0275)—An Irish bar, way out on the Western edge of town, where the great potholed boulevards turn to cobblestones, and the world across the Hudson flashes its come-hither signs. The back room, famous for its Hibernian sounds, is home to Larry Nugent, and his tin whistle and flute, and Tony DeMarco, and his fiddle, on Nov. 6. Sets at at nine and ten-thirty.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—The club most likely to feature an electric-rake player. Run by a couple of forward-looking Wisconsinites, the Knitting Factory takes in all manner of neo-this and post-that ensembles. The atmosphere is low-key bohemian—it's like a frat house for the avant-garde. **LIFE IN A BLENDER** performs on Nov. 4, and former Bongo **RICHARD BARONE** appears on Nov. 5. **CHRIS STAMEY,** who's here on Nov. 7, estimates that the number of bands he's been in is "less than a hundred but more than fifty." One of them was the dB's, a Hoboken band that produced some brilliant pop in the late seventies and early eighties. Last year, Stamey and fellow-dB Peter Holsapple released "Mavericks," their first combined effort since the dB's split up, and a few months later Stamey put out his third solo album, "Fireworks." Both are strong records, particularly the former, which sounds very much like the dB's redux. On his own, Stamey is quirkier, gravitating toward complicated, introspective pop. Music at nine.

Lone Star Roadhouse, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—A two-tiered honky-tonk that looks as if it could have been the inspiration for the Hard Rock Café. (It wasn't, of course; money was.) Upstairs, there's a display of vintage Gibson guitars. Downstairs, in the dining room, there's a stage, a dance floor, and caricatures of musicians who have blown through over the years. On Nov. 5, **TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS** and **BOUKMAN EKSPERYANS** share a bill. Music after nine. Dining.

Ludlow Street Café, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest belowstairs room that looks like a slightly spruced-up tenement apartment. There's cheap food, a Greater East Village crowd, and, every Monday night, **BEAT RODEO,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mix of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, the Velvets, and various found-pop numbers. Sets from about eleven.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—Bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. The three-woman operation known as **BETTY** will be here on Nov. 7. Their show, a sort of cabaret act gone haywire, contains elements of funk music, performance art, satire, and standup comedy; it moves along at an amphetamine pace, so that you feel as if you were channel-surfing on cable TV. Last year, the group put out their first album, "Hello Betty!" This is their first local performance since spring. Shows are usually at ten on Fridays and Saturdays, and at nine other nights.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—There's more to Michael's Pub than Woody Allen, whose Monday-night Dixieland binges have given the place a little star cachet. Non-filmmakers can usually be found onstage here the rest of the week, in a main dining room that strives for the appearance of a British pub but looks more like a good old American family restaurant. Still, there's a real nice red telephone booth when you walk in the door. **VERNEL BAGNERIS,** the creator of the musicals "One Mo' Time" and "Stagger-Lee," is currently offering his Jelly Roll Morton tribute. Supported by pianist Morten Gunnar Larsen, who gamely tackles some of Morton's trickier compositions, Bagneris presents musical numbers and sketches based on Morton's life. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret where a club soda costs, well, a *lot*. There are plenty of niceties if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous; tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires; and rest-room attendants who hover near the sink asking "Is the water too warm?" Two show-biz veterans, **ANN BLYTH** and **BILL HAYES,** are currently offering a show titled "An Elegant Evening of Beautiful Music." Ms. Blyth is a onetime M-G-M star whose best-known role was as Joan Crawford's daughter in "Mildred Pierce"; Mr. Hayes' credits include Broadway musicals, a stint on "Your Show of Shows," and a role in "Days of Our Lives." Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—It may look like a plain old steak house, and the photos on the walls may look like Sardi's leftovers, but in the back room you'll find swing bands, Dixieland combos, and couples sprung from the legacy of Fred and Ginger. Mondays belong to the Smith Street Jazz Society, Tuesdays and Fridays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS**, Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. Show times vary.

RUSSIAN TEA ROOM, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Upstairs, there's a small, red-gold-and-green cabaret, where **JULIE WILSON** can be found Thursdays at nine and Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen. **JO SULLIVAN LOESSER** performs on Nov. 8 at eight and, upon demand, ten-thirty. Dining and, of course, drinking.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The closest thing in Manhattan to a rain forest, this venerable club has many selling points: tropical drinks, Brazilian food, faux palm trees, a thatch-roofed bar. The live music is primarily from Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean, and the dance floor is usually hopping. The **OHIO PLAYERS** are here on Nov. 11. These masters of seventies funk and purveyors of titillating album covers have been doing reunion shows of late, but they've lost a bit of their edge over the years. They're skilled musicians, given to sweaty, spiralling jams. But their shows are a bit too slick. Their renditions of such hits as "Fire" and "Skin Tight" sound rather perfunctory, and the frequent "Can I hear you say yeah!" exhortations ring hollow. Music from nine on Mondays, from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Closed Sundays. Dining.

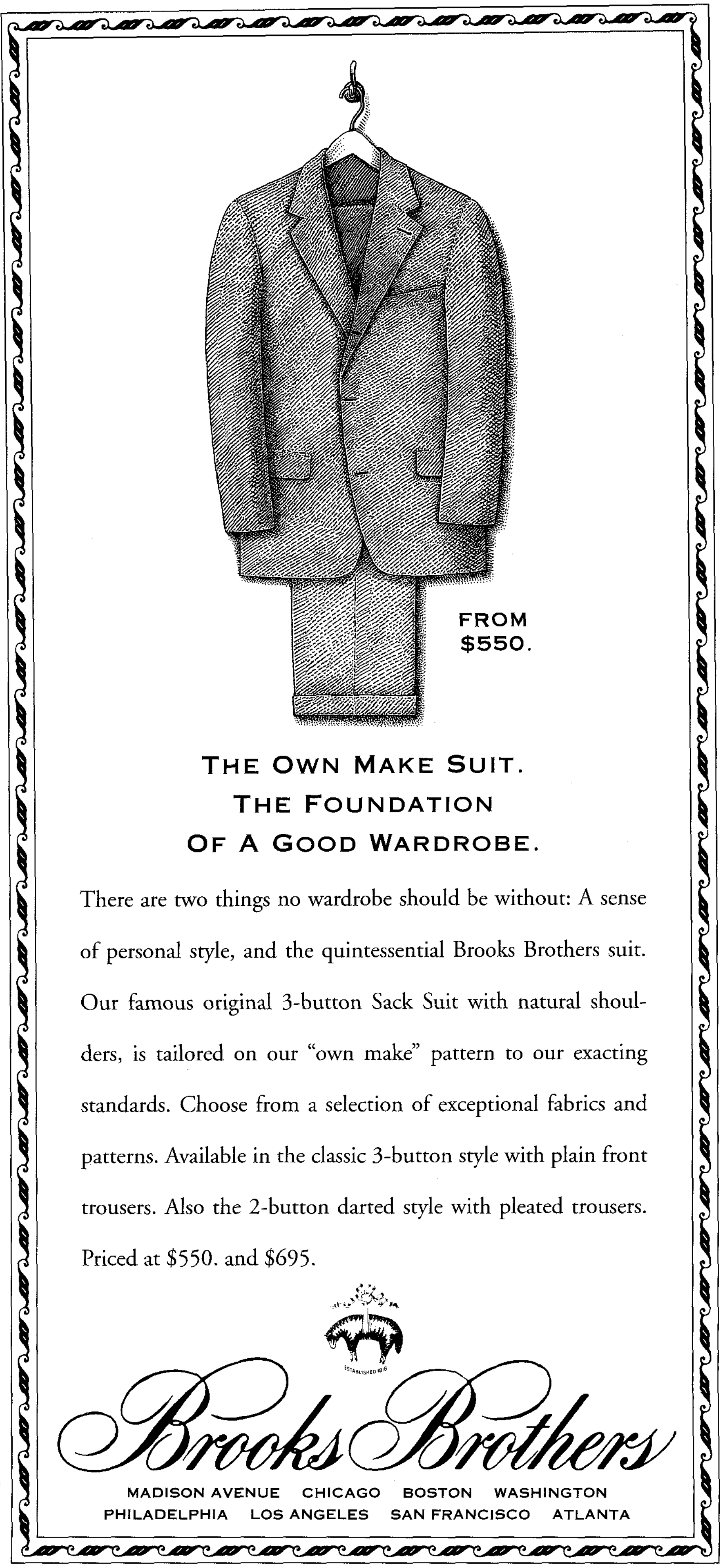
SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A pretty serious jazz shrine where, to reach the rest rooms, you have to pass within inches of the stage. This is significant because, if you head to the bathroom during a set, the crowd is likely to think you're a guest soloist. The **ART FARMER** quintet holds forth Nov. 3-8, and **TOMMY FLANAGAN'S** trio begins work on Nov. 10. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is nine. Dining.

TIME CAFÉ, 380 Lafayette St., at Great Jones St. (533-7000)—In the basement of this sleek and trendy restaurant is an unadorned, windowless, midsize room where the **MINGUS BIG BAND** packs them in every Thursday. The fourteen-piece ensemble, directed by trumpeter **JACK WALRATH** and trombonist **SAM BURTIS**, concentrates exclusively on the tricky, cacophonous work of its catalyst, Charles Mingus. Shows at nine and eleven. Dining.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main offerings in this plain, unaffected Chelsea loft space. Nov. 4 belongs to the **DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND**, Nov. 6 to **BO DIDDLEY**. Sets at eight and eleven weeknights, eight-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This slice-of-pie-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holliday to Lenny Bruce, from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. The Washington, D.C.-based singer and pianist **SHIRLEY HORN**, whose recent album, "Here's to Life," has given her career a long-overdue boost, leads a trio Nov. 3-8. The **ILLINOIS JACQUET BIG BAND** claims the week beginning on Nov. 10. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA**. Music at nine-thirty.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Home to an endless Summer of Love. Wetlands is a groovy, psychedelic, thoroughly Green night club. It is filled more or less nightly with young bands who like to play long, swirling jams and with throngs of young Deadheads who like to listen to them. **BÉLA FLECK AND THE FLECKTONES** are here on Nov. 10. Fleck is a banjo virtuoso who works in a genre all his own, a blend of jazz, bluegrass, and funk. He and his band, who have been nominated for three Grammy awards, recently released a new record, "UFO Tofu." Music at ten.



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EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

YOU'RE all revved up for a Wednesday night out, but none of the usual options beckon. Time for something new. So you stifle your prejudice against a club whose very name is a deception (a sly appropriation of the moniker of Miami's keystone night spot, though there's no actual affiliation), and head for Warsaw (17 West 19th Street). Right away, something's off—it's 1:30, there's a one-cab taxi line, and the driver's outside, dancing to his car radio. Not one club-kid Kelly girl is handing out invites and disco lit. The front door is clogged with professional club shnorrers gabbing for booze chits. Going inside, you soon learn why they're hanging outside. It's one of those evenings when all eyes are glued hopefully to the front door. Maybe it's better on another night.

Still full of energy, you run home, grab some sweats, and check out the new Lincoln Center branch of World Gym, the city's first twenty-four-hour sweat palace. Despite the fact that gym babies have always sworn that such hours would be the answer to their prayers, worshippers are few: three guys working out fully dressed—jackets, hats, the works—and a larger-than-life Patti Labelle type in full gear. "I'm a night bird. Always have been," she puffs, as you hit mile seven together at three A.M. "I'm going to stay up anyway, so I might as well burn some fat." Beats chewing it for free Seabreezes.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL—Nov. 6-7 at 8: Japanese choreographer Saburo Teshigawara and his troupe present a post-Butoh piece, "dah-dah-sko-dah-dah." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100.)... ¶ Nov. 10 at 7: David Rousseve's new dance-theatre work, "Urban Scenes/Creole Dreams," performed by his company, Reality. With musical accompaniment from B. J. Crosby and the Lavender Light Gospel Choir. Through Nov. 14. (Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 1-718 636-4100. The festival continues through Dec. 27.)

BIG APPLE CIRCUS—Featuring the flying Egorov Troupe, from Russia; a contortionist named Tunga, from Mongolia; Johnny Peers and his dog act; equestrienne Katja Schumann; and a host of others. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. Through Jan. 10. For information about show times and tickets, call 268-0055.)

PENNY ARCADE—In "Bitch! Dyke! Faghag! Whore!" (Top of the Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 982-9292. Fridays and Saturdays at 8.)

C. COLOMBO INC., EXPORT/IMPORT, GENOA—A performance piece by Leo Bassi. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 302-6989. Nov. 3-6, all at 8; Nov. 7 at 7 and 10; and Nov. 8 at 3.)

EMERGENCY BROADCAST NETWORK—A band that performs to a score of digitally reëdited satellite, cable, and network TV transmissions. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Nov. 5-8 at 8:30.)

LA MAMA—Nov. 5-8 at 8: "Big Butt Girls, Hard-Headed Women," Rhodessa Jones' one-woman show about women in prison. Through Nov. 22.... ¶ Nov. 5-7 at 10: "Typhoid Mary 911," a performance piece featuring Iris Rose, Joshua Fried, and Gary Ray. Through Nov. 14. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

ART

Revolutionary Steps

ZAHA HADID, the London-based architect responsible for the installation of "The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-32," at the Guggenheim (through January 3), has been sideswiped in virtually every review of this phenomenal exhibition. Her dashing structural interventions, with their slicing axes and asymmetries, have been taken to task for being, of all things, too assertive.

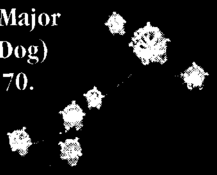
But Hadid deserves nothing less than a ticker-tape parade down Fifth Avenue's Museum Mile. The whole show has pace. The new and rather pedestrian tower galleries, which only weeks ago felt like listless appendages to Wright's central space, have been recast along streamlined diagonals by means of jaunty, raked wall mounts, room dividers, and ramps resembling fins or freeways, and they are now energy centers in their own right. Everywhere, Hadid makes appropriate contrapuntal use of chromatic shifts, offbeat lighting, and subtle geometric graphics that echo Malevich. The dark walls, ultra-low light, and freestanding double-sided Lucite easels in a room devoted to five seminal Constructivists are a little gone—they suggest a minerals display in a natural-history museum. Even when she goes too far, however, Hadid errs on the side of high spirits and glamour.

TOM BACHTELL

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—The Magritte retrospective looked better in London, where it was installed with theatrical savvy by David Sylvester, who also edited and co-wrote the Magritte catalogue raisonné; he clearly understands his odd subject. Here, the show is blandly overhung, and this has the undesirable effect of further homogenizing work by an artist who camouflaged his subversiveness with bourgeois-Belgian-looking effects. Still, the show must be seen. Magritte's not-so-latent Conceptualism, and his famous pictorial incongruities, have had an unsurpassed impact on world graphics, not to mention on a long list of recently influential artists, such as his countryman Marcel Broodthaers, who regarded him as a perverse father figure. Magritte's short-lived Vache period of the nineteen-forties, during which he suddenly began imitating Renoir, Japanese-inspired Impressionist prints, and various cartoon genres, is perhaps the most radical stylistic departure in twentieth-century art, anticipating Sigmar Polke as well as virtually all nineteen-eighties appropriation art. Through Nov. 22.... ¶ Part 1 of "The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang" focusses on the Ming-dynasty artist's revolutionary movement away from representation and toward abstraction. Seventy-four works by Tung are juxtaposed with works by his contemporaries. Through Nov. 29.... ¶ The installation of paintings, drawings, and sculpture from the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, includes works by Rubens, Goya, Delacroix, van Gogh, Fra Bartolommeo, and others. Through Jan. 17.... ¶ A new installation of works from the museum's large collection of Italian majolica and Venetian glass.... ¶ The third-century works in "Loma Negra, A Peruvian Lord's Tomb" range from small gilt nose and ear ornaments to large headdresses and masks.... ¶ Portraits—and self-portraits—by Thomas Eakins, Mary Cassatt, Winslow Homer, and other American artists. Through Jan. 17.... ¶ A retrospective of paintings, drawings, and prints by the Spanish realist Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652). Through Nov. 29.... ¶ Color photographs by Leo Rubinfien, taken in Japan, China, and Southeast Asia. Through Jan. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—The Matisse retrospective is organized into seven sections that are at once chronological and thematic. The most powerful section, over all, is the one covering the years 1913 to 1917, which is called "Abstraction and Experimentation." A big, subdued, rigorous Jungian masterpiece called "Bathers by a River" (completed in 1916), for instance, from the Art Institute of Chicago, is the great coup de theatre of this rich



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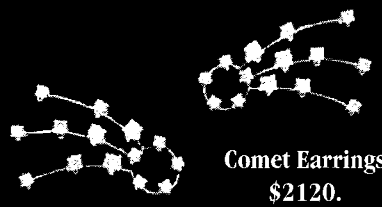

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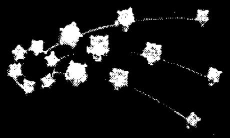

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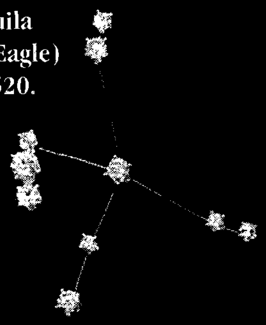

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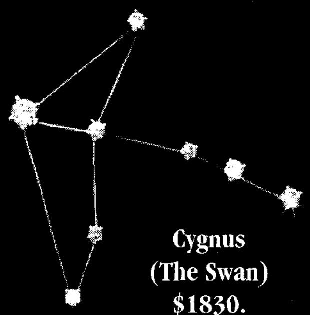

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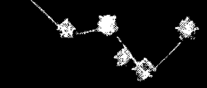

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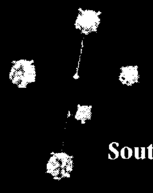

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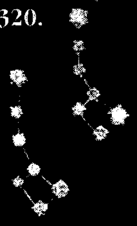

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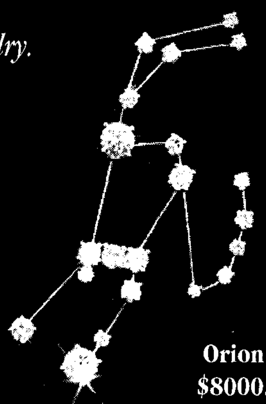

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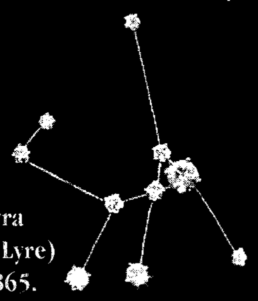

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ART—Cont'd

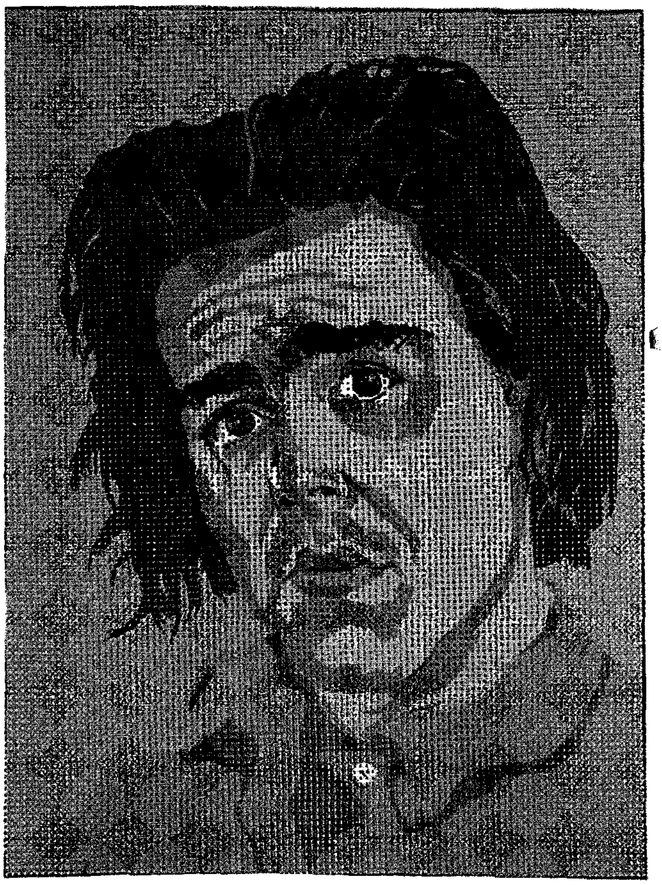
but surprisingly unrevealing exhibition. There are, however, some happy rediscoveries, such as a number of Matisse's exercises in bold contours and high style from the early forties—paintings like "The Rumanian Blouse," which may have inspired a collection or two by Saint Laurent, and several still-lifes and interiors with figures against black gridded grounds. Some of the great late cutouts seem disappointing. In fact, this exhibition doesn't begin or end with a bang. Through Jan. 12. (Plan wisely; call 708-9850 for ticket information. Tickets can be purchased in advance, and a limited number of same-day tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis.). . . ¶ Since many of the museum's major works are on reciprocal loan to other museums in exchange for Matisses, the museum has chosen to reinstall a number of its remaining paintings, sculptures, and other objects in a nonchronological fashion. There are a number of informative passages, such as Picasso's sexually charged "Demoiselles" and de Kooning's fierce "Woman I" displayed next to Louise Bourgeois' defiant, ironically erect "Sleeping Figure." Likewise, there is a welcome mixing of mediums, such as Bellmer's "La Poupée," a book with surrealistic pictures of body parts, displayed beside a realistic Robert Gober leg. Still, many of the juxtapositions are far less revealing than they were presumably intended to be. . . . ¶ The "New Photography" series has expanded to four galleries, and this eighth installment includes eight artists: Dieter Appelt, Ellen Brooks, Darrel Ellis, Dennis Farber, Robert Flynt, Mary Miss, Gundula Schulze, and Toshio Shibata. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ A hundred and twenty-five books, by such artists as Giorgio de Chirico, Lucio Fontana, Francesco Clemente, and Giacomo Manzù, are on view in "The Artist and the Book in Twentieth-Century Italy." Through Feb. 16. . . . ¶ "The Photographs of Lucas Samaras" comprises thirty works from his many series of Polaroids. Through Dec. 1. . . . ¶ Two series of color and black-and-white photographs by Suzanne Lafont. Through Nov. 15. (Museum hours through Jan. 12: open Sundays through Tuesdays, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Wednesdays, 12 to 6; Thursdays, 10:30 to 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-32." Through Jan. 3. (Open daily, except Thursdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—A show of works that Robert Rauschenberg made between 1949 and 1954, before the appearance of the groundbreaking "combines." As a young man working in New York, at North Carolina's Black Mountain College, and in Europe and North Africa, where he travelled for seven months with his friend Cy Twombly, Rauschenberg was already doing almost everything: painting, sculpture, collage, and photography, of course, but also Conceptual art works *avant la lettre* and all sorts of experiments in mediums ranging from newsprint to blueprints. His work has influenced many artists of his own generation (Warhol, Johns) and of the two that have arisen since (Rosenquist; David Salle and Cady Noland). Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ "Marc Chagall and the Jewish Theatre." Chagall's murals for the State Jewish Chamber Theatre, in Moscow, are in many ways ambitious, but they are not especially satisfying. They are notable for their delicacy, for their mixture of figurative and abstract forms, and for the essentially modest scale of their elements. Through Jan. 17. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings until 10.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—More than seventy paintings by Agnes Martin, in a retrospective organized on the occasion of her eightieth birthday. Starts Nov. 6. . . . ¶ A retrospective of nearly a hundred paintings by Jean-Michel Basquiat. Through Feb. 14. . . . ¶ Drawings from the forties by Alfonso Ossorio (1916-90). Through Nov. 29. . . . ¶ A large exhibition of twentieth-century figurative paintings and sculptures from the collection. Through Nov. 29. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—In the lobby, you can see "Dame of the Narrows" (1976), a large-scale sculpture of the Staten Island ferry arriving at the Manhattan terminal. It's a collaboration between two artists, Red Grooms and Mimi Gross, and the Ruckus Construction Company, a team of artists and engineers. You can go aboard the structure, and, once you're there, the boat starts rocking, waves rise, and the seagulls above go crazy. For this installation, Mr. Grooms has also made two large murals depicting the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and New Jersey skylines. Starts Nov. 6. . . . ¶ Meg Webster's installation, titled "Running," consists of a stream of water and an adjacent resource room with a computer and books on ecology. Through Jan. 3. . . . ¶ "Fantasy Furniture" is a collection of wacky nineteenth-century pieces from around the world. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)



Self-portrait by Wim Delvoye

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"Cultures at Crossroads: Southeast Asian Textiles from the Australian National Gallery." Seventy-nine objects, dating from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth, from Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, India, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Through Jan. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"Word as Image: The Art of Chinese Seal Engraving" explores the cultural significance of seal engraving and its relationship to calligraphy. On view are seals dating from 476 B.C.; books, paintings, and works of calligraphy with seal imprints; and engravers' tools. Through Dec. 12. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 7.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—A large show of drawings by Fra Bartolommeo, including studies for "Vision of St. Bernard" and "Madonna della Misericordia." Through Nov. 29. . . . ¶ "Renaissance Florence: Arts and Letters," drawn from the library's collection, features letters by Michelangelo and Machiavelli, an early edition of Dante's "Divine Comedy," and inflammatory pamphlets by Savonarola. Through Nov. 29. . . . ¶ All sorts of material culled from past Presidential elections (George Washington to Teddy Roosevelt) are on view in "Seeking the 'Splendid Misery.'" Through Nov. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—With "The Spatial Drive," this institution has once again pinpointed a category that likely doesn't exist. The best pieces here are concerned with transfers of energy and the discrepancies between actions and objects: there's Gretchen Faust and Kevin Warren's eighty feet of cardboard tubes for listening and speaking, which stretch from one end of the museum to the other; Marina Abramovic's crystal meditation beds; and Fred Holland's gilded heart and braided web of hair. Through Jan. 3. . . . ¶ "Flux-Attitudes," a large gathering of visitor-activated works by artists related to the Fluxus movement. Through Jan. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—Twenty panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt are on view. Organized in collaboration with the NAMES Project Foundation. Through Jan. 3. . . . ¶ "Mother Goose in New York," an exhibition of nineteenth-century juvenile books and woodblocks from the presses of McLoughlin Bros. Through Dec. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 11 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—Four hundred years' worth of prints and photographs portraying Native Americans. Included are works by Timothy O'Sullivan, George Catlin, Edward S. Curtis, and Gertrude Käsebier. Through Jan. 30. (Third Floor Gallery. Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.). . . ¶ In "New Worlds, Ancient Texts," more than two hundred manuscripts, maps, atlases, globes, books, and prints tell the story of the Old World and the New World—how they came to meet, their courtship, their quarrels, and their inevitable marriage. Through Jan. 9. (Gottesman Hall. Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.). . . ¶ Maps and atlases of yesteryear, as "Mapping the New World" demonstrates, were certainly more fanciful than today's A.A.A. road maps. The show reveals the fertile imagination of European mapmakers, who incorporated palm trees, double-spouted whales, cannibals, and other exotic things into their works. Through Jan. 9. (Edna Barnes Salomon

Room. Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.). . . ¶ On view in the Berg Collection are fifty manuscripts, including fragments from "Oliver Twist," "Tropic of Cancer," "To the Lighthouse," and "Ada." (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

P.S. 1 Museum, 46-01 21st St., Long Island City—"Postcards from Alphaville: Jean-Luc Godard in Contemporary Art, 1963-92." This show (which runs concurrently with the Godard film-and-video retrospective at MOMA) explores the avant-gardist's influence on artists from Barbara Bloom and Donald Baechler to Allan Ruppersberg and Mary Weatherford. Starts Nov. 8. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Ellsworth Kelly—Kelly, a supreme abstractionist, is also one of the best things ever to have happened to the plant kingdom: his botanical sketches are truly exquisite—as piercingly simple, crystalline, and intense as his nonobjective paintings. Ruskin's advice to young Pre-Raphaelites—to look at the world as if through lidless eyes—could plausibly have been the credo of this sixty-nine-year-old Yankee literalist. The poet John Ashbery, Kelly's neighbor in the Hudson River Valley, wrote the catalogue essay. Through Nov. 28. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

Wifredo Lam (1902-82)—A well-chosen show of works by an accomplished modernist. In the twenties and thirties, Lam lived in Europe, where he learned Cubism from Picasso and Surrealist methods from the Surrealists. But, as this exhibition amply demonstrates, Lam used that knowledge to express his own keen sense of human sadness. Through Dec. 20. (Americas Society, 680 Park Ave., at 68th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 12 to 6.)

Short List—**fernando botero,** Weintraub, 988 Madison Ave., at 77th St. (through Nov. 28); **stephen de staebler,** CDS Gallery, 76 E. 79th St. (through Nov. 21); **jan matulka** and **vaclav vytlacil,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through Nov. 14); **katherine porter,** Munroe, 9 E. 84th St. (opens at noon Wednesdays through Saturdays, through Nov. 14); **frank stella,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (through Nov. 12).

GALLERIES—57th STREET AREA

Eva Hesse (1936-70)—A fascinating show of paintings from 1960 to 1964, the period immediately preceding Hesse's first sculptures. These strong if immature paintings palpably delineate her struggle to work her way through Modernism—the lyrical post-Cubism of Hofmann, the automatism of Gorky, the stormy surrealism of Pollock. The results often contain hidden, possibly unconscious female imagery and pictorial strategies, such as arrows pointing to fleshy, sexy organs. In works from 1964, tantalizingly, struggle begins to give way to joy. Through Nov. 14. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

John Hull / Reuben Kadish (1913-92)—Unsettling paintings of soldiers at Los Alamos and surrounding sites, carrying out mundane tasks in the months before the testing of the first atomic bomb. The artist's notes indicate that his father produced the explosive lenses used to trigger that first bomb; if it is hard to locate the politics in these paintings, it is precisely because they are autobiographical, and are as much about a boy articulating his image of his father as they are about a reckoning with history. They are appealingly painted, but vague. / A group of very humorous primitive lumpen bronzes. Through Nov. 7. (Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

"Vote"—A gathering of politically confrontational art meant to inspire viewers to go to the polls. Half the show consists of good contemporary work by artists represented by P.P.O.W—including Ilona Granet, Erika Rothenberg, Christy Rupp, and Carrie Mae Weems. More compelling, however, are the works of less recent vintage. Heading that list is Philip Evergood's 1962 painting "There'll Be a Change in the Weather." It depicts black and white children in a schoolyard. Things seem friendly enough, except that all the white kids are sticking out their tongues. Through Nov. 28. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**vanessa bell,** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. (through Nov. 7); **ariane r. berman,** Gallery 84, 50 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 14); **joan brown,** Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 14); **thomas eakins,** Babcock, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Dec. 5); **käthe kollwitz,** Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 7); **robert kushner,** Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 14); **jane laudi,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 7); **james lechay,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 7); **louise nevelson,** Pace, 32 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 28); **jackson pollock,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 28); **peter poskas,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. (opens Saturdays at noon, through Nov. 28); **sylvia sleigh,** Stiebel, 32 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 14); **george tooker,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 5); **jack tworkov** and **al held,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 7); **tom wesselmann,** Janis, 110 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 14).

GALLERIES—SoHo

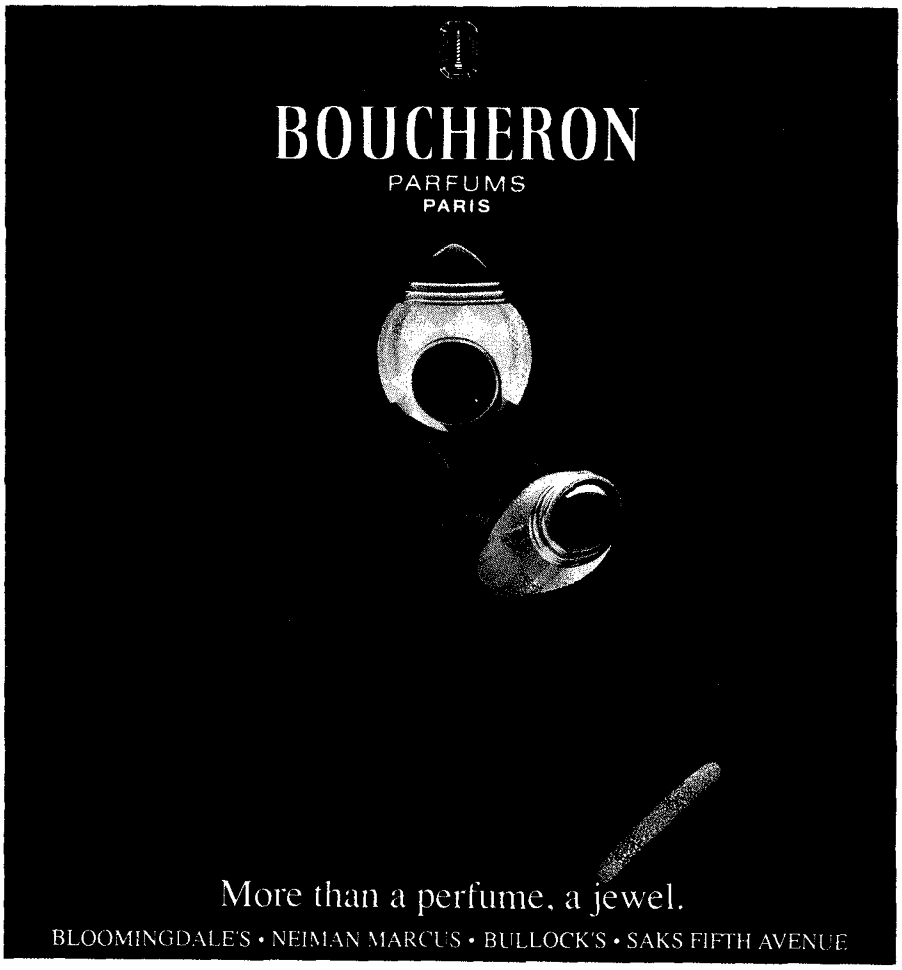
Willie Birch—New papier-mâché sculptures in which the artist has broken out of his confining blockiness. The surfaces are painted with the intense from-the-jar colors of poster paints, and instead of covering the works exclusively with charms and amulets, he is now using words—potent words about race and fear and repression. Through Nov. 7. (Roger, 136 Prince St.)

Wim Delvoye—Things must be getting edgier in Belgium, too. The conversation stopper here is a huge Valencian tile floor whose repeated images are curlicues of excrement. You have to squeeze past this piece to enter the gallery, and it puts you off balance for the rest of the show. There are some elaborately carved mahogany concrete mixers, and a series of made-up maps with land masses represented by such things as a hammer or an ejaculating penis. Through Nov. 7. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

Lawrence Gipe—This artist aspires to politically clever work but lacks the skill to make it. In this show of drawings, paintings, banners, and videos, titled "The Century of Progress Museum," Gipe attempts ironic statements about the triumph of industry. At best, though, they resemble worker-motivation materials from the thirties and forties. Why bother? Through Nov. 21. (Blum Helman Warehouse, 80 Greene St.)

A. R. Penck—Unlike his fellow Neo-Expressionists, Penck chose to stay in East Germany long after he became celebrated in the West. He is a more interesting artist than his reputation here would suggest, and this mini-survey of works on paper, from 1977 to the present, is something of a revelation. It includes many of the stick-figure works for which he is best known, but it begins with a number of far more realistic works—group portraits of friends—which show the often overlooked personal roots of his later symbol system. Through Nov. 28. (Nolan, 560 Broadway.)

Hirsch Perlman—There is a bit of the grift to this appealing group of drawings, a kind of manual on the art of asking people questions that they don't want to answer—the journalist's stock-in-trade. No. 14, the "Nonsense Technique," requires the interrogator to ask questions that make no sense. "This can become so nerve-wracking," the drawing states, "that it will be a great relief to answer questions that can be understood." Through Nov. 14. (Feature, 484 Broome St.)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Alexis Rockman—This artist is beginning to hit his stride—his work has become so sumptuous that it is almost overwhelming. The twenty-four-foot painting that is the centerpiece of this show is filled with hundreds of hybrid animal species—fish, flesh, and fowl crazily intermixed—that are posed, in a swamp, as if for a class portrait. In scale and sheer profusion of imagery, Rockman is reckoning with classic history painting and with the universal tableaux of the grand moralist Bosch. But he has yet to make any genuine allegorical commitments. Now that he has gathered all these inventive mutants into one magnificent primordial landscape, he needs to decide what it is he wants them to communicate. Through Nov. 28. (Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St.)

Sean Scherer / Keith Boadwee—In a wall jam-packed with paintings deliberately made to look old, this artist has very skillfully schematized Suprematism and reduced it to a poster gallery of forms and surfaces. In several large paintings, he is beginning to define his own territory, and while these works are more awkward, they are also more interesting. / Hilariously silly color photographs of the artist's penis dressed as Dopey, Happy, and Marge Simpson, and of his roly-poly belly painted to suggest such modern masters as Matisse and van Gogh. In another series of works—his kind of homage to Jasper Johns—Boadwee has painted his derrière with multicolored targets. Through Nov. 7. (Stux, 163 Mercer St.)

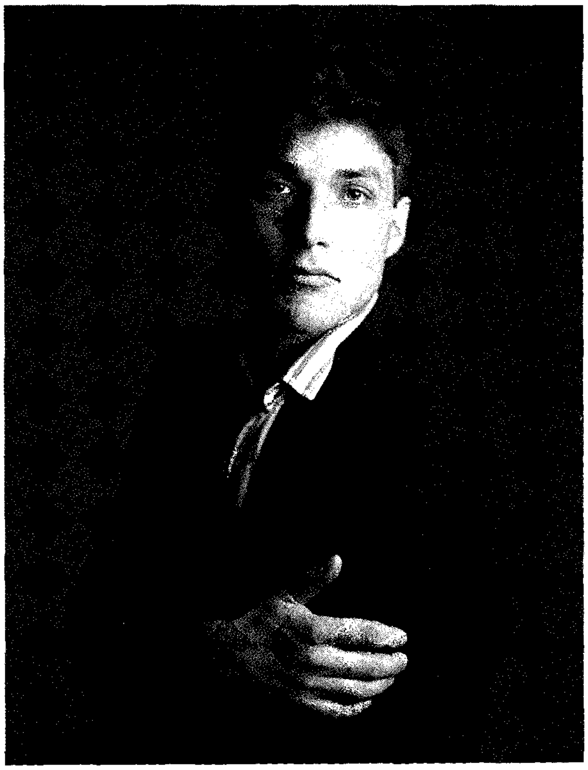
Jim Shaw—The largest work here is a massive grid of six hundred and sixteen paintings of facial elements of four friends, blown up and randomly rearranged. It is uncharacteristically austere, but another piece has some of the insanity of a homespun Lucas Samaras. It consists of a cardboard-and-wood log cabin whose ceiling, walls, and floor are covered in a grid of color photographs of the artist's face, contorted in hundreds of different expressions. It's an endless and futile attempt to capture and transmit lost moods. Through Nov. 7. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

Jaune Quick-To-See Smith—A group of paintings titled "The Quincentenary Non-Celebration." Each consists of a large image meaningful to Native Americans—a canoe, a horse, a map, for example—in the center of a collaged field that includes newspaper clippings about the plight of Indians. But the imagery also refers to successful white artists such as Jasper Johns and Susan Rothenberg, and there seems to be a political motive for Smith's appropriation of the gestural methods of late-New York School painting, both traditional and feminist. There may even be a reason for doing it with only the most workaday, convictionless gestures. But even so, one is still left with weak neo-expressionistic paintings of the art-school variety. Through Nov. 14. (Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St.)

Michelle Stuart—A show of stirringly beautiful books and large paintings-on-paper from the seventies. The scroll-like, unframed paintings were made by infusing the paper with earth from various spiritually significant locations, such as Mesa Verde, in Colorado, and the Great Serpent Mound, in Ohio. The artist then distressed the surfaces with rocks. The passage of two decades has not diminished their contemporaneity. Through Nov. 14. (Fawbush, 76 Grand St.)

Christopher Wool—Wool has always been crafty, but his method of working is so limited that he has often risked being the only big fish in a very small pond. In his last show, he used his familiar stencilled words that explosively expressed the moment's desperation, but in these new paintings he is merely repeating past successes. The exception is a painting that reads, "Fuck em if they can't take a joke." It resonates with all sorts of ironies—perhaps even some that are self-critical. Through Nov. 14. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

"Angels & Franciscans"—A show of models, drawings, and prints by a dozen youngish California architects who have been influenced by Frank Gehry and cyberpunk. Some of the work is pretty silly—furniture derived from Giotto's frescoes, for example—and much of it is sophomoric. An intelligent architect like Thom Mayne is not shown to advantage here. But some work is excellent. Eric Owen Moss's cyclopean house, which resembles a rounded Rubik's cube, is especially engaging, as is Lubowicki Lanier's model for a Pop residential addition. Through Nov. 7. (65 Thompson Street Gallery.)



Alexis Rockman

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Group Show—Alfred Leslie's "Four Panel Green," from 1957, was one of the artist's last AbEx paintings, and it marks the beginning of his break with modernist style. It is grand and impressive—sort of like Al Held meets Franz Kline—with a strong blush of the heroic, which the artist deliberately disrupts by fracturing the surface into four separate parts. Also on view are a fine sculpture and drawing by David Rabinowitch; a 1972 painting by Harriet Korman, which moves away from minimalist perfection in a lyrical manner; and a curious unfinished painting by Myron Stout. Through Nov. 28. (Flynn, 113 Crosby St.)

Short List—**Terry Adkins**, LedisFlam, 584 Broadway (through Nov. 14); **Massimo Antonaci** and **Sol LeWitt**, Weber, 142 Greene St. (through Nov. 21); **Tony Berlant**, Louver, 130 Prince St. (through Nov. 14); **Power Boothe**, Morrison, 59 Thompson St. (through Nov. 21); **Robert Bordo**, Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. (through Nov. 14); **Jeffrey Brosk**, Rosenberg, 115 Wooster St. (through Dec. 5); **Nancy Chunn**, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. (through Nov. 28); **Chuck Connelly**, Lennon, Weinberg, 580 Broadway (through Nov. 14); **Nancy Dwyer**, Baer, 476 Broome St. (through Nov. 28); **Christian Eckart**, RubinSpangle, 395 West Broadway (through Nov. 18); **Stephen Ellis**, Koury, 89 Greene St. (through Nov. 14); **April Gornik**, Thorp, 103 Prince St. (through Nov. 14); **Simon Leung** and **Andrea Zittel**, Rosen, 130 Prince St. (through Nov. 28); **Loren Munk**, Zarre, 154 Wooster St. (through Nov. 7); **Joel Otterson**, Gorney, 100 Greene St. (through Nov. 7); **Margaret Pomfret**, Phoenix, 568 Broadway (through Nov. 21); **David Reed** (through Nov. 28) and **Aldo Rossi** (through Dec. 12), Protetch, 560 Broadway; **Buzz Spector**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through Nov. 14); **Lauren Szold**, 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. (through Nov. 14); **Thomas Trosch**, Fiction-Nonfiction, 21 Mercer St. (through Oct. 31).

PHOTOGRAPHY

Family Portraits

A few years ago, when Nicholas Nixon exhibited and published photographs of people with AIDS, activists justifiably protested that his representations were clichéd. Nixon's latest exhibition, on view at Zabriskie gallery (724 Fifth Avenue, at 57th Street; through December 5), has no such weakness. A group of pictures that he took at the Perkins School for the Blind, in Watertown, Massachusetts, for example, are full of beauty, humor, and grit. Still, Nixon is at his best when taking pictures of people he really knows. The shots here of his son, daughter, and wife are nearly perfect revelations of family intimacy. (They're on a par with the wonderful portraits that Nixon has done, over several years, of his wife and her three sisters.) There are fascinating resemblances between Nixon's shots of his kids and Sally Mann's images of her children. But there are also curious differences, especially in the spheres that preoccupied Freud.

Short List—**John Blakemore**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through Nov. 14); **John Divola**, Baum, 588 Broadway (through Nov. 28); **Mitch Epstein**, Tenri Cultural Institute, 575 Broadway (through Nov. 7); **Robert Flynt** and **Connie Imboden**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through Dec. 5); **Yousuf Karsh** and **Ernst Haas**, International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; both shows through Jan. 24); **Annie Leibovitz**, Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through Dec. 5); **Duane Michals** and **Lois Greenfield**, International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open daily except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; both shows through Nov. 8); **Izhar Patkin** and **Nam June Paik**, Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 21); **Leo Rubinfien**, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45; through Jan. 3); **Aaron Siskind**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. (through Nov. 21); **Frederick Sommer** and **Weegee**, Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 28); **Karl Struss**, Drake, 50 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 7); **Philip Trager**, Saul, 155 Spring St. (through Nov. 14); **James Welling**, Lawrence Markey, 55 Vandam St. (open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 2; through Dec. 18).

MUSIC

High Notes

Music and museums sometimes meet on the ground of music-related exhibitions, and two worthwhile ones are currently in place around town. At the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, at Lincoln Center, there is an extensive one featuring memorabilia of the Polish soprano Marcella Sembrich (1858-1935), for many years the pride of the Metropolitan Opera and since her death the puzzlement (and occasionally, if they listen intently and perseveringly, the joy) of record collectors. This is the Sembrich who in her youth couldn't decide between voice, piano, and violin (Liszt helped her choose) and so once utilized on all three for a gala evening in the Met's first season. This exhibit runs through February 11.

At the Museum of Television & Radio (25 West 52nd Street), a New York Philharmonic retrospective is set to run through most of that orchestra's current sesquicentennial season. Since Leonard Bernstein and the Philharmonic were pioneers of music for the small screen, there is a lot of footage that should interest conductor-watchers; and from earlier days there are tantalizing, rarely heard broadcasts. Among the more intriguing: two Beethoven's Ninths performed eight days apart with the same chorus and soloists, under Bernstein and Herbert von Karajan. No wonder they were rivals.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**l'elisir d'amore,** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Stanford Olsen, Gino Quilico, and Enzo Dara; conducted by Edoardo Müller. (Nov. 2, Nov. 6, and Nov. 10, all at 8.). . . **madama butterfly,** with Diana Soviero, Wendy White, Michael Sylvester, and Juan Pons; Julius Rudel. (Nov. 3 at 8 and Nov. 7 at 1:30.). . . **tosca,** with Ghena Dimitrova, Luciano Pavarotti, and Alain Fondary; Christian Badea. (Nov. 4 and Nov. 7 at 8.). . . With Carol Neblett, Emil Ivanov, and Sherrill Milnes; Christian Badea. (Nov. 11 at 8.). . . **semiramide,** with Christine Weidinger, Gloria Scalchi, Frank Lopardo, and Barseg Tumanyan; Ion Marin. (Nov. 5 and Nov. 9 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

New York City Opera—**die fledermaus,** sung in English, with Pamela South, Susan Wallin, Richard Drews, and Louis Otey; conducted by Mark Gibson. (Nov. 3 at 8 and Nov. 8 at 1:30.). . . **carmen,** with Susanne Marsee, Eva Zseller, John Duykers, and Edward Huls; Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Nov. 4 at 8.). . . With John Absalom as Don José. (Nov. 7 at 1:30.). . . With Antonio Barasorda as Don José. (Nov. 10 at 8.). . . With Robynne Redmon, Christiane Riel, Antonio Barasorda, and Harry Dworchak; Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Nov. 6 at 8.). . . **the magic flute,** sung in English, with Elizabeth Futral, Linda Louise Kelley, Paul Austin Kelly, Matthew Lau, and John Calvin West; Scott Bergeson. (Nov. 7 at 8.). . . **110 in the shade,** with Karen Ziémba and Brian Sutherland; Paul Gemignani. (Nov. 11 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. The company's season ends on Nov. 15.)

Peking Opera Troupe—Presenting "The Story of Lin Chung," featuring Li Bao-chun (whose interpretations draw strongly on Chinese martial-arts traditions). (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St. 373-1850. Nov. 5-7 at 7:30 and Nov. 8 at 2.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting Gounod's "Faust." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Nov. 7 at 7:30 and Nov. 8 at 2:30.)

RECITALS

Andrew Bolotowsky—The flutist, who has a knack for dusting off bits of repertoire that nobody else seems to have heard of, will play operatic transcriptions (including an arrangement from Verdi's "Rigoletto" by the opera's publisher, Giulio Ricordi); with violinist Gabriela Klassen. (Bargemusic, Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Nov. 4 at 7:30. Admission by contribution.)

Tokyo String Quartet—Performing Schubert's A-Minor String Quartet, Berg's String Quartet, and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet (with Richard Stoltzman). (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 4 at 8.)

Horacio Gutiérrez—The pianist offers Haydn's Sonata No. 50 in C Major, Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze," and Liszt's B-Minor Sonata. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 4 at 8.)

International Harpsichord Festival—Concluding concerts of the series, at Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 4 at 8: In his New York début, the English harpsichordist Davitt Moroney performs Bach's "French" Suite No. 4 and three movements from "The Art of Fugue" (including the performer's own completion of Bach's final fugue from the set), in addition to a D-minor suite by Louis Couperin and virginal music by Byrd (whose complete keyboard works he is currently recording). . . . ¶ Nov. 7 at 8: Harpsichordists Kenneth Gilbert, Andrew Appel, Olivier Baumont, and Davitt Moroney play works for multiple keyboards by François Couperin, Rameau, J. C. Bach, and J. S. Bach (his concertos for one, two, three, and four harpsichords, backed up by the instrumentalists of the Four Nations Ensemble).

Bargemusic—Pianist Phillip Bush performs Scarlatti sonatas; Jian Wang joins him for Brahms' E-Minor Cello Sonata; and violinist Nai-Yuan Hu rounds out the ensemble for Mendelssohn's D-Minor Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Nov. 5 at 6:30 and Nov. 8 at 4, the Thursday concert being a benefit, by candlelight.)

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MUSIC–Cont'd

GRETE SULTAN—The pianist, whose training (with Edwin Fischer and Claudio Arrau) and early career hark back to pre-war Berlin, and who inspired such works as Cage's "Études Australes," performs Schubert's A-Major Sonata (D. 959), as well as Debussy's "Images" (Book One) and "Études" (Book Two). (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 242-4770. Nov. 5 at 8.)

NEW YORK PHILOMUSICA CHAMBER ENSEMBLE—Playing Haydn's G-Major String Quartet (Op. 76, No. 1), plus the clarinet quintets of Mozart and Hindemith (featuring David Krakauer). (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 5 at 8.)

ALIA MÚSICA—The Spanish ensemble performs Iberian medieval music and works from the Judeo-Spanish tradition. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Nov. 5 at 8. . . . ¶ The Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. Nov. 7 at 2. No tickets necessary.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER—Presenting Mozart's G-Minor Piano Quartet, Brahms' Clarinet Quintet, and the world première of Richard Danielpour's "Sonnets to Orpheus" (on texts by Rilke, with soprano Dawn Upshaw). (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 6 at 8 and Nov. 8 at 5.)

CONTEMPORARY PIANO FESTIVAL—Where only the piano is old: a Steinway built in 1894. Nov. 5: Stephen Drury, a Boston-based pianist, plays some Cage, a recent work by John Zorn, and Frederic Rzewski's now classic "The People United Will Never Be Defeated" (in a solo version with tape). . . . ¶ Nov. 6: Robin Holcomb, performing her own songs and piano compositions. . . . ¶ Nov. 7-8 (with the same program both nights): Margaret Leng Tan, a diva of avant-garde pianism, offers a survey of musical Minimalism, its stylistic predecessors, and its progeny. Those who would dismiss Minimalism as no more than a fad may find themselves challenged as, over the course of three hours, Ms. Leng Tan weaves her way from two of Satie's "Gnossiennes" (written in 1890), through early Cage, Hovhannes, and Feldman, to style-defining late-sixties statements by Glass and Reich, before bringing listeners up to date with ensuing American and Asian developments. Several readings in Minimalist literary style promise to add variety. (Roulette, 228 West Broadway. 219-8242. Evenings at 9.)

AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF MICROTONAL MUSIC—This year's festival of music with wee intervals concludes with works by Cage, Takemitsu, Sophia Gubaidulina, Bruce Mather, Johnny Reinhard, Phill Niblock (his "Didjiridoos and Dont's," featuring didjiridooist Ulrich Krieger and a tape recorder), and Robert Priest (his "Spectral Evidence," for bassoon, actor, tape, and two young assistants, which involves Nathaniel Hawthorne, the Salem witch trials, and the forty-five-second-long natural reverberation of an abandoned water cistern in Port Townsend, Washington). (New York University Theatre, 35 W. 4th St. Nov. 7 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

GERALD RANCK—The harpsichordist continues his survey of Scarlatti's sonatas. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. 874-5210. Nov. 8 at 3.)

"MUSIC AND MORE"—A grab bag of performance and commentary from pianists Israela Margalit and David Dubal, among others. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 8 at 3.)

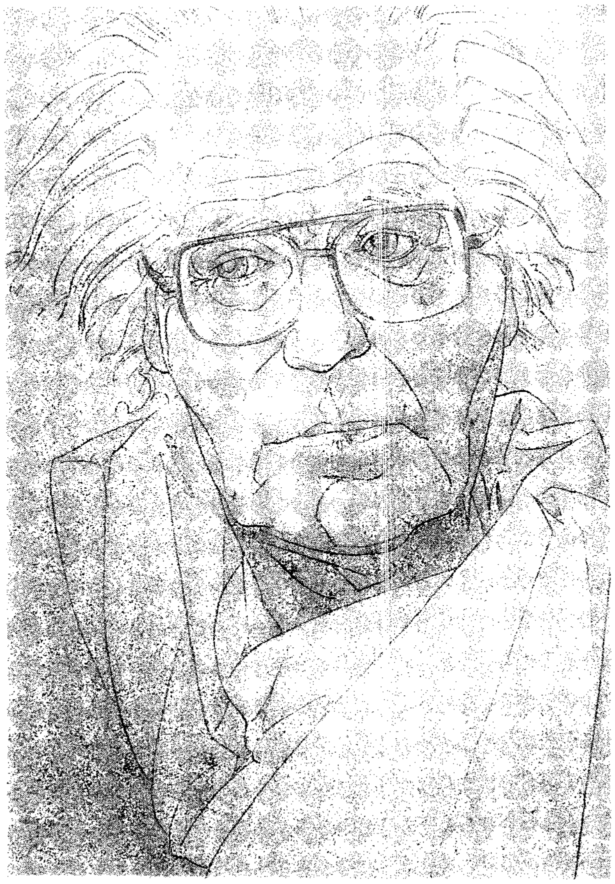
FRETWORK—The English viol consort plays a new piece by Simon Bainbridge, as well as intimate works from the Golden Age of England, including In Nomines by Tye and Taverner; Fantasias by Gibbons, Jenkins, and Purcell (including the "Fantasia Upon One Note"); and Brownings by Byrd and Elway Bevin (both much attempted by rhythmically ambitious early-music amateurs). Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-0675. Nov. 8 at 4.)

DA CAPO CHAMBER PLAYERS—In an all-Messiaen concert, including the "Poèmes Pour Mi," the "Quartet for the End of Time, and excerpts from "Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus"; with organist Jon Gillock and soprano Lucy Shelton among the guests. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Nov. 8 at 4. No tickets necessary.)

Talich String Quartet—The Czech foursome plays quartets by Beethoven, Smetana, and Dvořák. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Nov. 8 at 5.)

Kathleen Battle—The soprano performs songs by Schumann, Bizet, Strauss, and Victor Herbert; with pianist Margo Garrett. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 8 at 8. . . . **note:** This program will be repeated on Dec. 13.)

Works by Paul Bowles—As a young man of twenty, Bowles made his way to Paris (in 1931) to hang around with Gertrude Stein and her pals. She influenced him deeply (especially with her advice to check out North Africa, where he eventually set up housekeeping and set such books as "The Sheltering Sky" and "The Delicate Prey"), as did her musical entourage (notably Virgil Thomson, with whom Bowles studied). His musical output, much of it highly accomplished, extends to three operas, four ballets, instrumental works, songs, and incidental music for theatre works (including plays by William Saroyan and Tennessee Williams). Pianist Allison Voth and colleagues will perform a number of his compositions and read from his literary oeuvre. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 8 at 8.)



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Sylvan Winds—Performing wind music by Mozart, Carl Reinecke, Elliot Carter, Martin Bresnick, and Elliot Carter (his "Eight Études and a Fantasy"). (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Nov. 9 at 8.)

Harvey Shapiro—Cellist, playing sonatas by Beethoven and Strauss, among other works; with pianist Jonathan Feldman. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Nov. 9 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

North/South Consonance—Presenting de Falla's Harpsichord Concerto (featuring Max Lifchitz as soloist), as well as works by Emma Lou Diemer, Roque Cordero, Rodolfo Halffter, and others. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Nov. 9 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Usdan Celebration—A twenty-fifth-anniversary salute to the arts center in South Huntington, Long Island, from soprano RoseMarie Freni, pianist Jeffrey Biegel, the Tokyo String Quartet, the Quintet of the Americas, and others. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 9 at 8.)

Hai-Ye Ni—Cellist, performing sonatas by Poulenc and Britten, Chopin's "Introduction and Polonaise Brillante," and other works; with pianist Anne Epperson. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 10 at 8.)

Assad Duo—The Brazilian brothers Sergio and Odair Assad play classical guitar duets by Villa-Lobos, Astor Piazzolla, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 10 at 8.)

Frederick Lonberg-Holm Ensemble—The composer/cellist and four co-conspirators play new works, among them "Roll," a 1989 composition for four golf-ball rollers and cello. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. 242-4770. Nov. 10 at 8.)

Guarneri Quartet—Performing Haydn's "Lark" Quartet (Op. 64, No. 5), Dvořák's E-Major Quartet (Op. 61), and Hindemith's "Die Serenaden" (with the assistance of soprano Lucy Shelton and oboist Ronald Roseman). (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 11 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 3 at 7:30: Zdenek Macal conducts Mahler's Sixth Symphony. . . . ¶ Nov. 5-7 at 8: Zubin Mehta conducts the world première of Messiaen's "Éclairs sur l'Au-Delà," an eleven-movement, Biblically based work for a very large orchestra, commissioned by the Philharmonic. . . . **note:** Paul Griffiths will present a pre-concert lecture, open to ticketholders, on Nov. 7 at 7.

Canterbury Choral Society—Charles Dodsley Walker directs Mahler's Symphony No. 8 (the "Symphony of a Thousand," with the forces here limited to a mere five hundred singers, plus a full symphony orchestra). (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 3 at 8.)

Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra—Mario Bernardi conducts Berlioz' "Le Corsaire" Overture, Britten's "Les Illuminations" (with soprano Edith Wiens), Schumann's Symphony No. 2, and the United States première of Allan Bell's "An Elemental Lyric." Those who view philanthropy as an opportunity for unstinting self-promotion will be pleased to note that Mr. Bell has included segments of gas pipeline in his percussion section, as a salute to the consortium of natural-gas companies which is sponsoring the orchestra's tour. (In retrospect, let's be thankful that the Schumann symphony, which treats the brass section with such delicacy, was not commissioned by, say, a nineteenth-century manufacturer of garden hose.) (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 6 at 8.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Gerard Schwarz conducts Paul Creston's "Pavane Variations," Wolf's "Italian Serenade," the ballet suite

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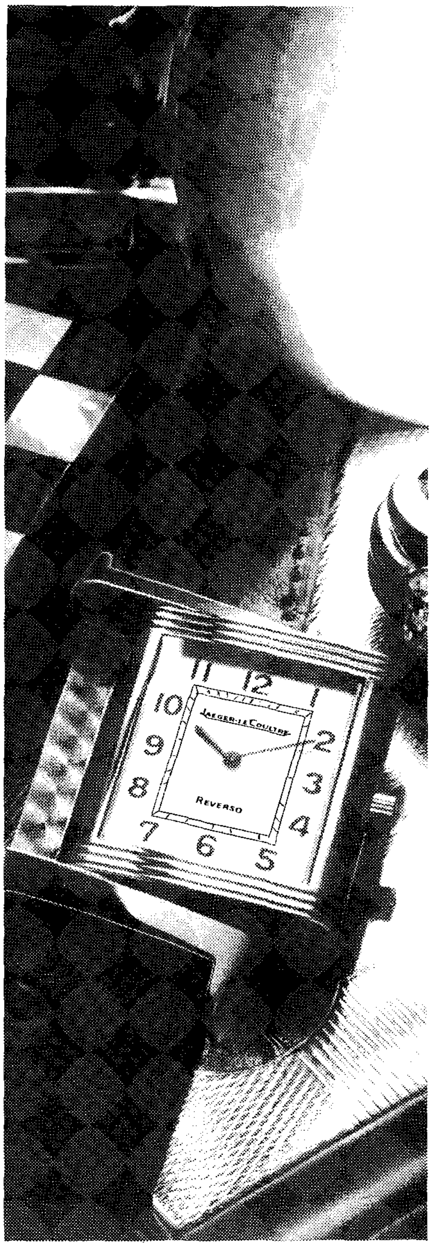

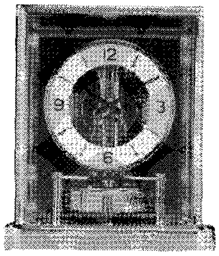

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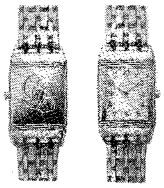

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AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA—Dennis Russell Davies conducts premières of works by Cage (his "Seventy-four"), Andrew Imbrie, Robert Beaser, and Richard Wernick (his Concerto for Saxophone Quartet and Orchestra, featuring the Raschèr Saxophone Quartet). (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 8 at 3.)

KIROV ORCHESTRA OF ST. PETERSBURG—At Avery Fisher Hall, Valery Gergiev conducting. Nov. 8 at 3: Music by Prokofiev (his Third Symphony, as well as excerpts from "Romeo and Juliet") and Tchaikovsky (his First Piano Concerto, with Vladimir Feltsman). . . . ¶ Nov. 9 at 8: Music by Tchaikovsky (his Symphony No. 6 and excerpts from "The Sleeping Beauty") and Shostakovich (his Violin Concerto No. 1, with Vadim Repin).

MANHATTAN CHAMBER SINFONIA—Glen Cortese conducts Mozart's Symphony No. 40, Stravinsky's "Scènes de Ballet," and Kenton Coe's Concerto for Organ, Strings, and Percussion (with Stephen Hamilton ensconced at the church's Aeolian-Skinner organ). (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Nov. 8 at 4. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

MUSICA VIVA—Walter Klauss directs the choir in Rossini's "Petite Messe Solennelle," with Warren Jones at the piano and Edward Brewer at the harmonium. (All Souls Unitarian Church, Lexington Ave. at 80th St. 535-5530. Nov. 8 at 7.)

PRAGUE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA—The conductorless ensemble plays Martinů's Serenade No. 3, (for oboe, clarinet, four violins, and cello), Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4 (the "Italian"), and Beethoven's "Creatures of Prometheus" Overture and Violin Concerto (with Robert McDuffie.) (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 8 at 7:30.)

MUSIC TODAY ENSEMBLE—Serving up an appetizing musical smorgasbord of gastronomic inspiration, including Paul Schoenfield's "Café Music," Aaron Jay Kernis's "The Four Seasons of Futuristic Cooking," and Barbara Kolb's "Three Place Settings." For dessert, Gerard Schwarz conducts (and Janet Bookspan narrates) "Façade," William Walton's amusing setting of Edith Sitwell's inimitable verses. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Nov. 9 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

CONCERT ROYAL—James Richman directs jubilant works by J. S. Bach—his Magnificat and Cantatas No. 214 and No. 51 (the latter with soprano Christine Brandes and Baroque trumpeter John Thiessen)—and a morose "Lamento" by Heinrich Bach (Johann Sebastian's great-uncle). (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 11 at 8.)

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHOIR—James Litton directs an all-Duruflé concert, including his Requiem; with organist William Trafka. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. Nov. 11 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

BEASTIE BOYS—Pale hip-hop for the rhythmically challenged. The Boys' hearts are in the right place, but there's a thinness to their sound that's very much in evidence on the latest album, "Check Your Head." Crush a few beer cans on your forehead, however, and they're awesome. With the Rollins Band and Da Lenchmob. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Nov. 6-7 at 8.)

RANDY NEWMAN—Just when it seemed we'd lost him to his second career as a composer of sentimental film soundtracks—the last album of actual songs by Randy Newman came out four years ago—this heartrending, devastatingly sick-minded pianist-singer is quietly slipping into town for a rare concert. Not to be missed. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Nov. 10 at 8.)

The Ramones/Social Distortion—A happy irony of history: the brilliantly obtuse Ramones, who, in the mid-seventies, were way out in front of the do-it-yourself punk wave, have released an album ("Mondo Bizarro") that sounds like fresh 1992 grunge. Pairing these idiot savants from Queens with L.A.'s magnificent Social Distortion was a canny idea—this will be a memorable night of stirring thrash anthems. With Overwhelming Color Fast. (Roseland. Nov. 10-11 at 8.)

Erasure—Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Nov. 3 and Nov. 6-7 at 8.

The Jesus and Mary Chain—Roseland. Nov. 5 at 8.

Santana—Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Nov. 5-6 at 8.

Joanne Brackeen—Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 6 at 8.

Inti-Illimani—Town Hall. Nov. 6 at 8.

Youssou N'Dour—Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 749-5838. Nov. 7 at 7 and 11.

Sweet Honey in the Rock—Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 7 at 8.

Grupo Aymara—Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Nov. 7 at 8.

Celtic Fiddles—Kevin Burke, Johnny Cunningham, and Christian Lemaitre. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 7 at 8.)

Bross Townsend Tribute—With Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Jimmy Scott, Mr. Townsend, and others. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Nov. 8 at 7. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Bruce Springsteen—Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. Nov. 9-10 at 7:30.

Freddie Jackson—With CeCe Peniston and Najee. (Paramount. Nov. 10 at 7.)

Mary Cleere Haran—Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 11 at 8.

Alison Fraser—92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Nov. 11 at 8.

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Giants—Vs. the Green Bay Packers, Nov. 8 at 1.

Knicks—Home opener vs. the Philadelphia 76ers, Nov. 7. . . . ¶ Vs. the Nets, Nov. 10. (Game time, 7:30.)

Rangers—Vs. the Buffalo Sabres, Nov. 2. . . . ¶ Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, Nov. 4. . . . ¶ Vs. the Tampa Bay Lightning, Nov. 9. . . . ¶ Vs. the Washington Capitals, Nov. 11. (Game time, 7:30.)

Islanders—Vs. the Tampa Bay Lightning, Nov. 7 at 7:35.

Devils—Vs. the Montreal Canadiens, Nov. 11 at 7:35.

(The Giants play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands, 1-201 935-8111; the Knicks and the Rangers play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders play at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils play at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

Carlos Santana

JOSE ORTEGA

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Mums & Roses—Catch fall's final fling. The New York Botanical Garden's annual fall flower show spotlights countless chrysanthemums, from Nov. 7 to Nov. 29. For more information, call 220-8777. . . . ¶ The Brooklyn Botanic Garden's show (same dates) will feature plants of the disparate rose family, which includes apples and almonds. For more information, call 1-718 941-4044, ext. 215 or 255.

Grand Master Tea—Soshitsu Sen XV, Grand Master of the Urasenke School of Tea of Kyoto, will give a lecture-demonstration on *chanoyu*, the Japanese tea ceremony. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. Nov. 9 at 2. No tickets necessary.)

Beatles Bow Tie—The annual performing-arts bazaar has everything from Fab Four memorabilia to autographed *Playbills*. (New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. Nov. 8, from 10:30 to 4. Tickets at the door.)

Words—Nov. 4 at 8: Susan Sontag will read from her novel "The Volcano Lover." (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ Nov. 5 at 7: Joseph Brodsky, Suk Young Hwang, and three others will read from their own works. (PEN American Center, 568 Broadway, at Prince St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Nov. 6 at 8: Galway Kinnell will read from his own poetry. (New York Open Center, 83 Spring St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ Nov. 9 at 8: Yehuda Amichai and Elizabeth Swados will present an evening of poetry, performance, and song. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. Tickets at the door on the night of the performance.). . . ¶ Nov. 9 at 8: Joanne Woodward and Maria Tucci, among others, in a benefit reading. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ Nov. 10 at 8: James Laughlin, founder and publisher of New Directions, is the host at an evening of reminiscences and readings, with Hayden Carruth and Walter Abish, among others. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.)

Talks—Nov. 2 at 6:30: Bassist Milt Hinton will show his slides of jazz musicians and discuss the history of jazz. (Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. Tickets at the door on the night of the lecture.). . . ¶ Nov. 4 at 7:15: Mathilde Krim will speak about AIDS. (Temple Shaaray Tefila, 250 East 79th St. No tickets necessary.)

Tours—Nov. 7 at 9:30 A.M.: Check out new subway art, sponsored by the Municipal Art Society. For information, call 439-1049. . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 2: Look for trouble at the hangouts of nineteenth-century tabloids headliners: the Bowery Boys, the Dead Rabbits, and their ilk, sponsored by the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. For information, call 431-0233.

QUEEN ELIZABETH 2
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CUNARD

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

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	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN "MOVIES IN BRIEF," STARTING ON PAGE 30.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)

Theatre 1: "Enchanted April" (directed by Mike Newell), with Miranda Richardson, Josie Lawrence, Polly Walker, and Joan Plowright.

Theatre 2: "Swoon" (Tom Kalin).

Theatre 3: "Night on Earth" (Jim Jarmusch); and "Delicatessen" (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, in French).

Theatre 4: "My New Gun" (†).

Theatre 5: "Simple Men" (Hal Hartley), with Robert Burke and William Sage.

Theatre 6: "In the Soup" (Alexandre Rockwell), with Seymour Cassel and Steve Buscemi.

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)

Nov. 2: Theatre closed.

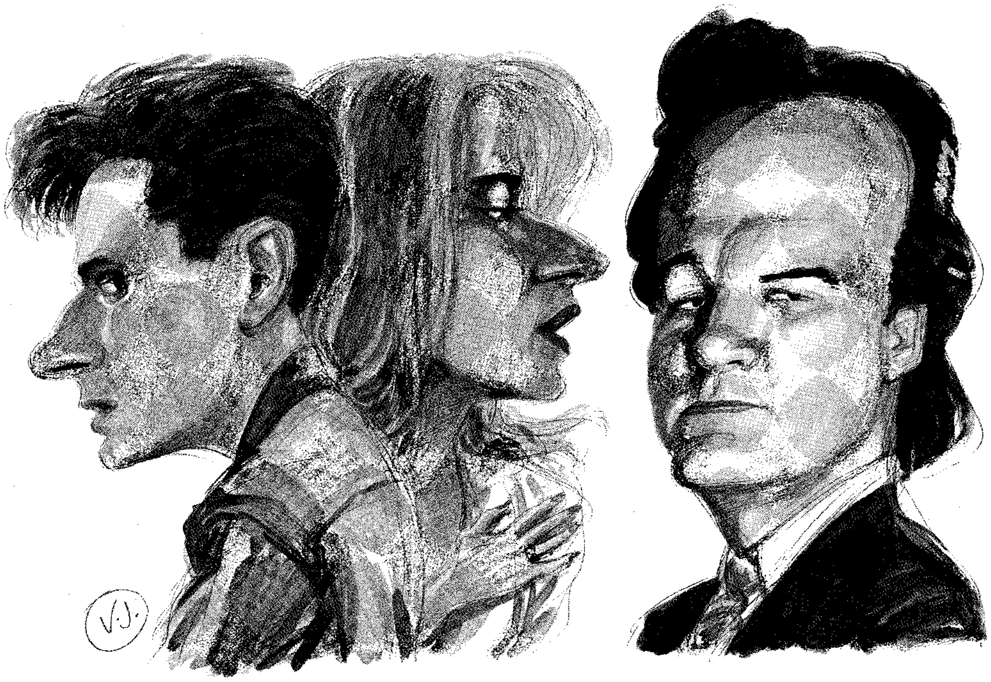
Nov. 3: "Metropolitan" (1990, Whit Stillman); and "American Fabulous" (Reno Dakota), a documentary on Jeffrey Strouth.

Nov. 4: "Dogfight" (1991, Nancy Savoca), with River Phoenix and Lili Taylor; and "American Fabulous."

Nov. 5: "The Adjuster" (Atom Egoyan); and "American Fabulous."

Nov. 6: "ACLA" (Aurelio Grimaldi, in Italian); "Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician" (Mario Martone, in Italian); and "Confortorio" (Paolo Benvenuti, in Italian).

Nov. 7: "The Flight of the Innocent" (Carlo Carlei, in Italian); "The Cherry Orchard" (Antonello Aglioti, in Italian); "Another Life" (Carlo Marzacurati, in Italian); and "Sandman" (Stefano Gabrini, in Italian).



Tony Goldwyn, Lorraine Bracco, and James Belushi in "Traces of Red"

VICTOR JUHASZ

Nov. 8: "Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician," "The Flight of the Innocent," "Confortorio," and "ACLA."

Nov. 9: Theatre closed.

Nov. 10: "Sandman," "The Cherry Orchard," and "Another Life."

Nov. 11: "Confortorio," "ACLA," and "Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician."

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)

Theatre 1: Through Nov. 5: "Candyman" (†). From Nov. 6: "Passenger 57" (Kevin Hooks), with Wesley Snipes.

Theatre 2: "The Last of the Mohicans" (†).

Theatre 3: "Husbands and Wives" (†).

Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)

Theatre 1: "Hero" (†).

Theatre 2: "Reservoir Dogs" (†).

Theatre 3: Through Nov. 5: "Blade Runner" (1982, Ridley Scott), with Harrison Ford. From Nov. 6: "The Efficiency Expert" (Mark Joffe), with Anthony Hopkins.

Theatre 4: "A River Runs Through It" (†).

Theatre 5: "Under Siege" (Andrew Davis), with Steven Seagal, Tommy Lee Jones, and Gary Busey.

Theatre 6: "Glengarry Glen Ross" (†).

Theatre 7: Through Nov. 5: "Singles" (†). From Nov. 6: "Jennifer Eight" (Bruce Robinson), with Andy Garcia, Uma Thuman, and Lance Henrickson.

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)

Theatre 1: "The Mighty Ducks" (Stephen Herek), with Emilio Estevez.

Theatre 2: "Zebrahead" (†).

Theatre 3: "Gas Food Lodging" (Allison Anders).

Theatre 4: "Consenting Adults" (Alan J. Pakula), with Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Kevin Spacey.

Theatre 5: "Howards End" (James Ivory), with Anthony Hopkins.

Theatre 6: "Sarafina!" (†).

Theatre 7: "The Panama Deception" (Barbara Trent), a documentary.

19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)

Theatre 1: "Husbands and Wives" (†).

Theatre 2: "Consenting Adults" (Alan J. Pakula), with Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Kevin Spacey.

Theatre 3: Through Nov. 5: "Rampage" (William Friedkin), with Michael Biehn and Alex McArthur. From Nov. 6: "Jennifer Eight" (Bruce Robinson), with Andy Garcia.

Theatre 4: "Zebrahead" (†).

Theatre 5: Through Nov. 5: "1492: Conquest of Paradise" (†). From Nov. 6: "Fathers and Sons" (Paul Mones), with Jeff Goldblum.

Theatre 6: "Candyman" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)

"Bob Roberts" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)

"Dr. Giggles" (Manny Coto), with Larry Drake.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)

Theatre 1: "Of Mice and Men" (†).

Theatre 2: "Sarafina!" (†).

Theatre 3: "Consenting Adults" (Alan J. Pakula), with Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Kevin Spacey.

Theatre 4: "Zebrahead" (†).

34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)

Theatre 1: "Under Siege" (Andrew Davis), with Steven Seagal.

Theatre 2: Through Nov. 5: "School Ties" (Robert Mandel), with Brendan Fraser. From Nov. 6: "Jennifer Eight" (Bruce Robinson), with Andy Garcia, Uma Thuman, and Lance Henrickson.

Theatre 3: "Hero" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)

"The Public Eye" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)

"A Day in October" (Kenneth Madsen), with D. B. Sweeney and Kelly Wolf.

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)

Theatre 1: "Bob Roberts" (†).

Theatre 2: "Glengarry Glen Ross" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)

"The Last of the Mohicans" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)

Through Nov. 5: Ninth Israel Film Festival. From Nov. 6: To be announced.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)

Theatre 1: "Unforgiven" (Clint Eastwood).

Theatre 2: "Dr. Giggles" (Manny Coto), with Larry Drake.

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)

"Zebrahead" (†).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)

Theatre 1: "Hero" (†).

Theatre 2: "Night and the City" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)

Theatre 1: Through Nov. 10: "Consenting Adults" (Alan J. Pakula), with Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Kevin Spacey. From Nov. 11: "Aladdin" (Ron Clements and John Musker), an animated film.

Theatre 2: "In the Soup" (Alexandre Rockwell), with Seymour Cassel and Steve Buscemi.

Theatre 3: "Enchanted April" (Mike Newell), with Miranda Richardson, Josie Lawrence, Polly Walker, and Joan Plowright.

Art East Cinema, 1st Ave. at 61st. (644-1111)

"Venice/Venice" (Henry Jaglom).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)

Theatre 1: "Sneakers" (†).

Theatre 2: "Of Mice and Men" (†).

Theatre 3: "The Public Eye" (†).

Theatre 4: "1492: Conquest of Paradise" (†).

Theatre 5: "Singles" (†).

Theatre 6: "Mr. Saturday Night" (†).

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)

Theatre 1: "Candyman" (†).

Theatre 2: "Under Siege" (Andrew Davis), with Steven Seagal.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)

"Husbands and Wives" (†).

New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)

Theatre 1: "A River Runs Through It" (†).

Theatre 2: Through Nov. 5: "School Ties" (Robert Mandel). From Nov. 6: "Jennifer Eight" (Bruce Robinson), with Andy Garcia, Uma Thuman, and Lance Henrickson.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)

"Johnny Stecchino" (Roberto Benigni, in Italian), with Benigni.

Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)

"Rampage" (William Friedkin), with Michael Biehn and Alex McArthur.

East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)

Through Nov. 5: "1492: Conquest of Paradise" (†).

From Nov. 6: "Jennifer Eight" (Bruce Robinson), with Andy Garcia, Uma Thuman, and Lance Henrickson.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Night and the City" (†).
Theatre 2: "Hero" (†).
Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 5: "Singles" (†). From Nov. 6: "Fathers and Sons" (Paul Mones), with Jeff Goldblum.
Theatre 2: "Zebrahead" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Nov. 10: "Mr. Saturday Night" (†). From Nov. 11: "Traces of Red" (†).
Theatre 4: "Glengarry Glen Ross" (†).
Theatre 5: "Candyman" (†).
Theatre 6: "Under Siege" (Andrew Davis), with Steven Seagal.
Theatre 7: "The Mighty Ducks" (Stephen Herek), with Emilio Estevez.
86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Consenting Adults" (Alan J. Pakula), with Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Kevin Spacey.
Theatre 2: "Dr. Giggles" (Manny Coto), with Larry Drake.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 3: "Interpretation of Dreams" (1990, directed by Andrei Zagdansky; in Russian); and "The Honeymoon Killers" (1970, Leonard Kastle), with Shirley Stoler and Tony Lo Bianco. From Nov. 4: "The Quarrel" (Eli Cohen).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: Through Nov. 5: "Feed" (Kevin Rafferty and James Ridgeway), a documentary. From Nov. 6 (tentative): "8½" (1963, Federico Fellini; in Italian).
Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Dr. Giggles" (Manny Coto), with Larry Drake.
Theatre 2: "Of Mice and Men" (†).
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "The Public Eye" (†).
Theatre 2: "Night and the City" (†).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 5: "The Whole Truth" (Dan Cohen). From Nov. 6: "Danzón" (María Novaro; a Mexican film, in Spanish).
Theatre 2: "Brother's Keeper" (Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky), a documentary.
Theatre 3: "A Day in October" (Kenneth Madsen), with D. B. Sweeney and Kelly Wolf.
Theatre 4: "Bob Roberts" (†).
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "Under Siege" (Andrew Davis), with Steven Seagal.
Theatre 2: "Reservoir Dogs" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Public Eye" (†).
Theatre 4: "Sneakers" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Last of the Mohicans" (†).
Theatre 6: "Night and the City" (†).
Theatre 7: "Hero" (†).
Theatre 8: Through Nov. 10: "Night and the City" (†). From Nov. 11: "Traces of Red" (†).
Theatre 9: "Glengarry Glen Ross" (†).
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Dr. Giggles" (Manny Coto), with Larry Drake.
Theatre 2: "Singles" (†).
Theatre 3: "Of Mice and Men" (†).
Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Consenting Adults" (Alan J. Pakula), with Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Kevin Spacey.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "Bob Roberts" (†).
Theatre 2: "Sneakers" (†).
Theatre 3: "Dr. Giggles" (Manny Coto), with Larry Drake.
Theatre 4: "The Public Eye" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Last of the Mohicans" (†).
Theatre 6: "A Day in October" (Kenneth Madsen), with D. B. Sweeney and Kelly Wolf.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Mr. Saturday Night" (†).
Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
Through Nov. 5: "Singles" (†). From Nov. 6: "Hugh Hefner: Once Upon a Time," a documentary.
57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"Glengarry Glen Ross" (†).
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 5: "Of Mice and Men" (†). From Nov. 6: "The Efficiency Expert" (Mark Joffe), with Anthony Hopkins.
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 5: "Gas Food Lodging" (Allison Anders). From Nov. 6: "Flirting" (John Duigan).
Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"The Lover" (Jean-Jacques Annaud), with Jane March and Tony Leung.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Howards End" (James Ivory), with Anthony Hopkins.
Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"A River Runs Through It" (†).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Night and the City" (†).
Lincoln Plaza I, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Danzón" (María Novaro; a Mexican film, in Spanish).
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 3: "A Brief History of Time" (Errol Morris), a documentary. From Nov. 4: "The March Factory Girl" (Aki Kaurismaki).
Theatre 3: "Waterland" (†).
Theatre 4: "Waterland" (†).
Theatre 5: "Van Gogh" (Maurice Pailat, in French), with Jacques Dutronc.
Theatre 6: "Close to Eden" (Nikita Mikhalkov, in Russian).
Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"The Last of the Mohicans" (†).
84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Husbands and Wives" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 5: "Rampage" (William Friedkin), with Michael Biehn and Alex McArthur. From Nov. 6: "Jennifer Eight" (Bruce Robinson), with Andy Garcia, Uma Thuman, and Lance Henrickson.
Theatre 3: "Reservoir Dogs" (†).
Theatre 4: "Hero" (†).
Theatre 5: "Consenting Adults" (Alan J. Pakula), with Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Kevin Spacey.
Theatre 6: "Under Siege" (Andrew Davis), with Steven Seagal.
Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Howards End" (James Ivory), with Anthony Hopkins.
Theatre 2: "The Public Eye" (†).
Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "Candyman" (†).
Theatre 2: "Dr. Giggles" (Manny Coto), with Larry Drake.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Under Siege" (directed by Andrew Davis), with Steven Seagal.
Theatre 2: "Under Siege."
Theatre 3: "Candyman" (†).
Theatre 4: Through Nov. 5: "Candyman" (†). From Nov. 6: "Passenger 57" (Kevin Hooks), with Wesley Snipes.
Theatre 5: "Night and the City" (†).
Theatre 6: "1492: Conquest of Paradise" (†).
Theatre 7: Through Nov. 5: "South Central" (†). From Nov. 6: "Passenger 57."
Embassy I, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
Through Nov. 5: "Zebrahead" (†).
From Nov. 6: "Jennifer Eight" (Bruce Robinson), with Andy Garcia, Uma Thuman, and Lance Henrickson.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "Sarafina!" (†).
Theatre 2: "Hero" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Nov. 5: "The Mighty Ducks" (Stephen Herek), with Emilio Estevez. From Nov. 6: "Zebrahead" (†).
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Rampage" (William Friedkin), with Michael Biehn and Alex McArthur.
National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 10: "Dr. Giggles" (Manny Coto), with Larry Drake. From Nov. 11: "Traces of Red" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Last of the Mohicans" (†).

IN A 'BLIND' TASTING of the most popular malt whiskies conducted by the Sunday Times, we are pleased to record that The Macallan premium brand emerged with an 'Excellence Quotient' of 93.78%. Its nearest competitor achieved *no more than 62.8%.*

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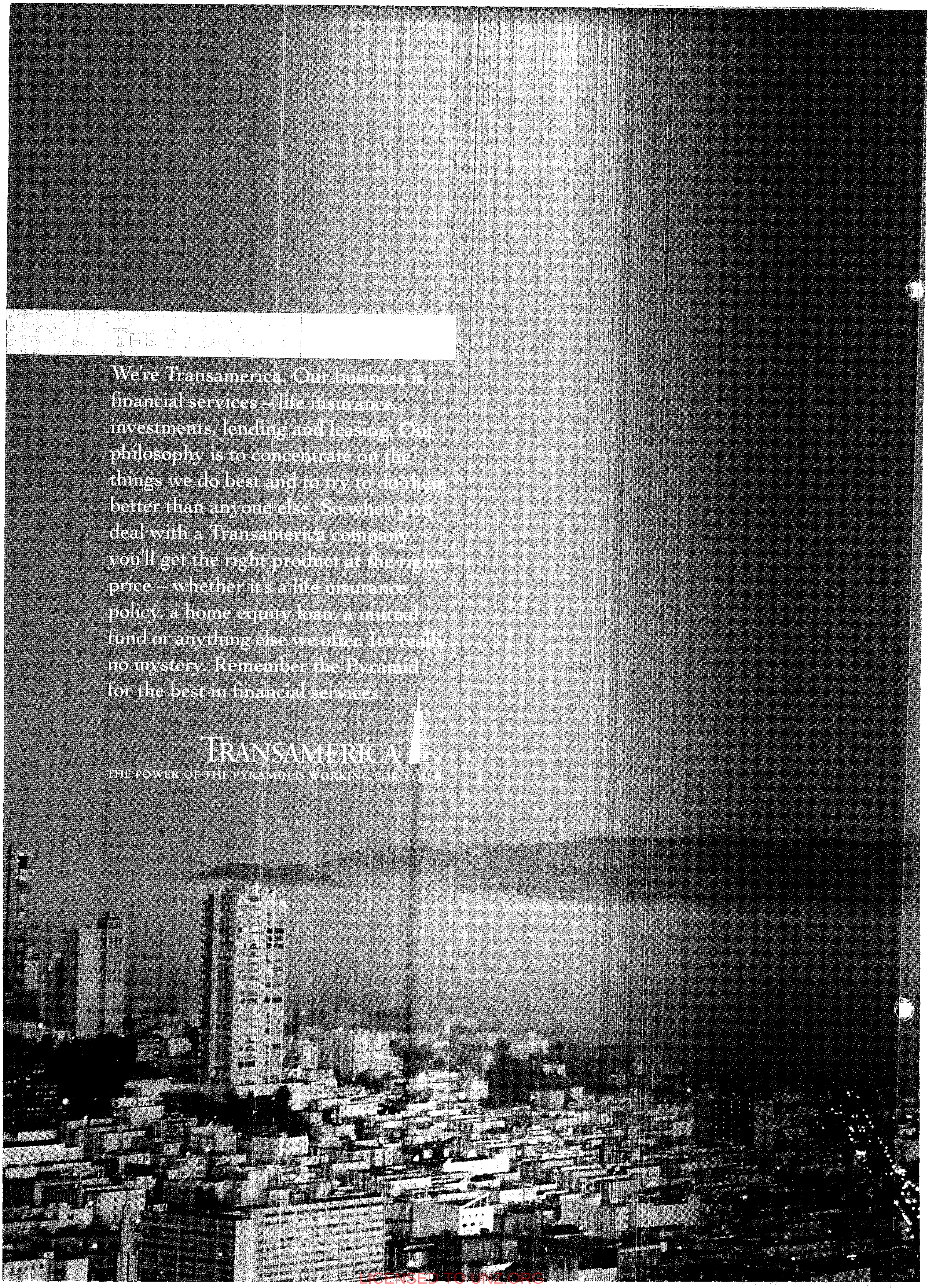

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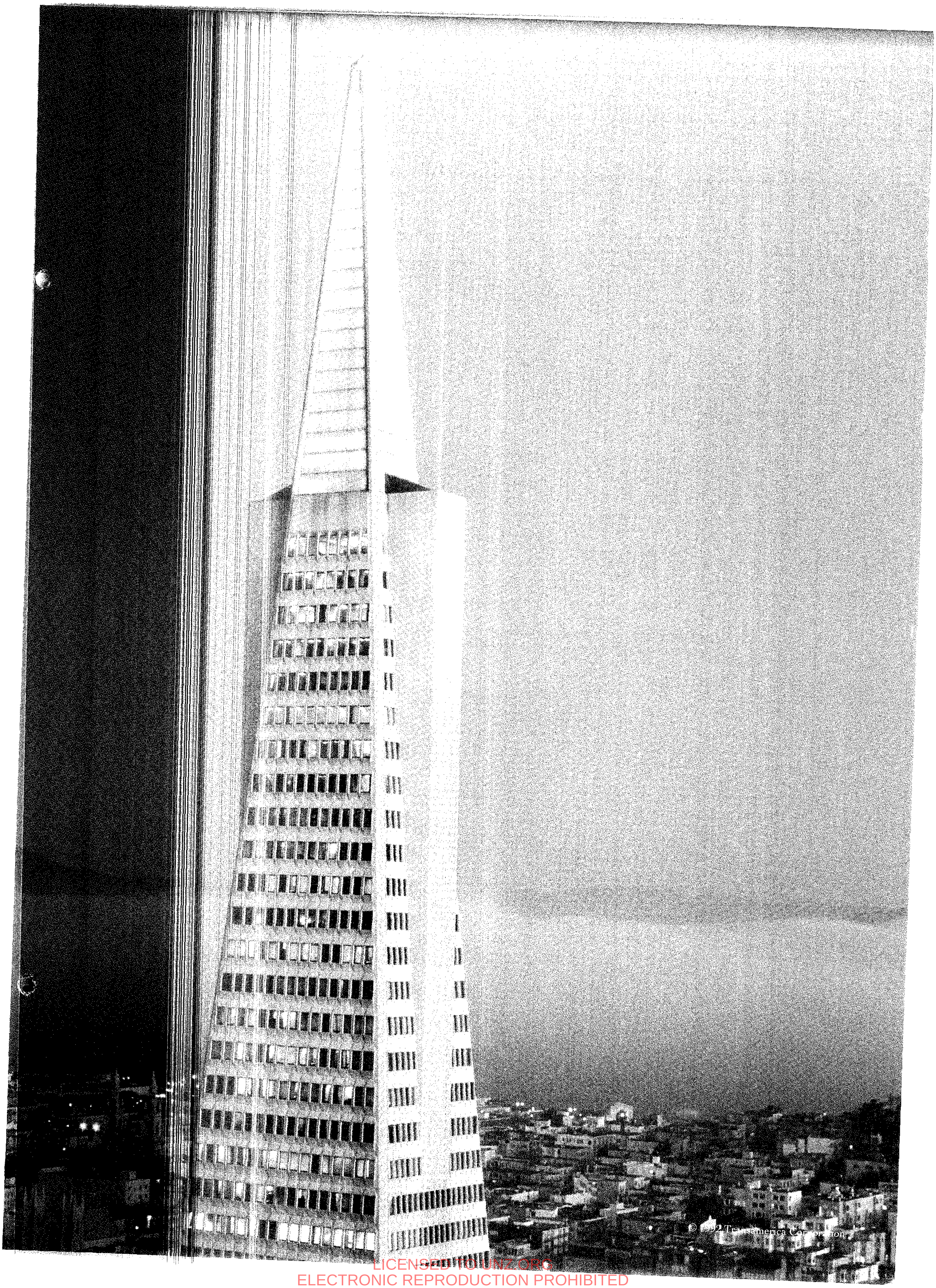

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REVIVAL HOUSES

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through Nov. 5: "8½" (1963, directed by Federico Fellini; in Italian).
From Nov. 6: "Nashville" (1975, Robert Altman), with Ronee Blakley.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Nov. 2: "Le Jour Se Lève" ("Daybreak"; 1939, Marcel Carné; in French); and "Bizarre, Bizarre" (1937, Carné; in French).
Nov. 3: "Someone to Watch Over Me" (1987, Ridley Scott), with Tom Berenger, Mimi Rogers, and Lorraine Bracco; and "Black Rain" (1989, Ridley Scott), with Michael Douglas, Andy Garcia, and Kate Capshaw.
Nov. 4: "Foreign Correspondent" (1940, Alfred Hitchcock), with Joel McCrea and Laraine Day; and "Saboteur" (1942, Hitchcock), with Priscilla Lane and Robert Cummings.
Nov. 5: "Three Days of the Condor" (†) and "Klute" (†).
Nov. 6-7: "Midnight Cowboy" (1969, John Schlesinger), with Dustin Hoffman, Jon Voight, and Brenda Vaccaro; and "The Graduate" (1967, Mike Nichols), with Anne Bancroft, Hoffman, and Katharine Ross.
Nov. 8: "The Decameron" (1971, Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian); and "The Canterbury Tales" (1972, Pasolini; in Italian).
Nov. 9: "Jean de Florette" (1985, Claude Berri; in French), with Yves Montand, Gérard Depardieu, Elisabeth Depardieu, and Daniel Auteuil; and "Manon of the Spring" (1987, Berri; in French), with Montand, Auteuil, and Emmanuelle Béart.
Nov. 10: "Victim" (†) and "Peeping Tom" (see below).
Nov. 11: "Indiscretion of an American Wife" (1954, Vittorio De Sica), with Jennifer Jones and Montgomery Clift; and "The Gold of Naples" (1957, De Sica; in Italian), with Sophia Loren, De Sica, Silvana Magnano and Totò.

Tribeca Cinema, 41 White St. (925-2570)
Through Nov. 3: "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex" (1972, Woody Allen); and "Stardust Memories" (1980, Allen), with Allen, Charlotte Rampling, Jessica Harper, Marie-Christine Barrault, and Tony Roberts.
Nov. 4-5: "Wild Is the Wind" (1957, George Cukor), with Anna Magnani, Anthony Quinn, and Anthony Franciosa; and "The Black Orchid" (1959, Martin Ritt), with Sophia Loren, Quinn, and Ina Balin.
Nov. 6-7: "Stolen Kisses" (1968, François Truffaut; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud; and "The Soft Skin" (1964, Truffaut; in French), with Jean Desailly, Françoise Dorléac, and Nelly Benedetti.
Nov. 8: "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" (1988, Philip Kaufman), with Daniel Day-Lewis, Lena Olin, and Juliette Binoche.
Nov. 9-10: "Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!" (1990, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish); and "High Heels" (1991, Almodóvar; in Spanish).
From Nov. 11: "The Long, Hot Summer" (1958, Martin Ritt), with Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Anthony Franciosa, Orson Welles, Lee Remick, and Angela Lansbury; and "The Three Faces of Eve" (†).

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Nov. 2 at 2:30 and Nov. 5 at 6: "I Found Stella Parrish" (1935, directed by Mervyn LeRoy), with Kay Francis. . . . ¶ Nov. 2 at 3: "Numéro Deux" (1975, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). . . . ¶ Nov. 2 at 6 and Nov. 6 at 2:30: "Female" (1933, Michael Curtiz). . . . ¶ Nov. 3 at 2:30 and Nov. 7 at 2: "As the Earth Turns" (1934, Alfred E. Green). . . . ¶ Nov. 3 at 3 and Nov. 6 at 6: Two videos by Godard, 1986. . . . ¶ Nov. 3 at 6: "Nouvelle Vague" (1990, Godard; in French, with no English subtitles). . . . ¶ Nov. 3 at 6 and Nov. 6 at 6: "One Way Passage" (1932, Tay Garnett), with William Powell, Kay Francis, and Aline MacMahon. . . . ¶ Nov. 5 at 2:30 and Nov. 7 at 5: "Marked Woman" (1937, Lloyd Bacon), with Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart. . . . ¶ Nov. 5 at 3 and 6: "Kiev Blue" (1991, Heather MacDonald) and "Fighting in Southwest Louisiana: Gay Life in Rural America" (1991, Peter Friedman and Jean-Louis Brunet). . . . ¶ Nov. 6 at 3 and Nov. 7 at 5: "First Name: Carmen" (1984, Godard; in French). . . . ¶ Nov. 7 at 2:30: "Hail Mary" (1985, Godard; in French). . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 2: "Dark Victory" (1938, Edmund Goulding), with Davis, George Brent, and Geraldine Fitzgerald. . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 2:30: "Every Man for Himself" (1979, Godard; in French), with Isabelle Huppert. . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 5: "Now, Voyager" (1942, Irving Rapper), with Davis and Paul Henreid. . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 5: "Every Man for Himself" (1979, Godard; in French), the Swiss television version of his film. . . . ¶ Nov. 9 at 2:30: "Lolita" (1962, Stanley Kubrick), with Sue Lyon, James Mason, Peter Sellers, and Shelley Winters. . . . ¶ Nov. 9 at 3: "Le Rapport Darty" (1989, Godard; in French). . . . ¶ Nov. 9 at 6: "A Heart of Stone" (1992, Claude Sautet, in French), with Daniel Auteuil, Emmanuelle Béart, and André Dussolier. . . . ¶ Nov. 9 at 6:30: A program of films by Lynne Sachs.

MOVIES IN BRIEF

SEE PRECEDING PAGES FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS. IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

Now, Voyeur

For connoisseurs of repellent cinema, there's never been a psycho thriller as insidiously skin-crawling as Michael Powell's 1960 "Peeping Tom" (playing November 10, at Theatre 80 St. Marks), a portrait of a would-be director as a serial killer. (Brian De Palma took the back story to this film and made it the plot of "Raising Cain.") Carl Boehm plays the title creep, a focus-puller at a London movie studio who moonlights as a pornographic still-photographer and spends his spare time shooting a documentary about murder, starring his victims. Boehm's father, played by Powell, was a celebrated biologist who wanted to chart every stage of human development and specialized in "fear and the nervous system." While using a 16-mm. camera to document his son's growth, he went to fanatic extremes, even scaring him awake with a lizard so he could study the boy's hysterical reaction. Boehm extends this line of research: he turns the third leg of his tripod into a bayonet, and films his female targets as they die in a state of excruciating fright. The movie has its witty moments—a shrink notes that Boehm "has his father's eyes." But "Peeping Tom" isn't a black comedy. It's an obsessive-compulsive nightmare.

Anna Massey and Carl Boehm in "Peeping Tom"

PHOTOFEST

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

Bob Roberts—Tim Robbins is the writer, director, and star of this mock documentary that chronicles, C-SPAN style, the senatorial campaign of a young radical-right demagogue. Bob Roberts is a folksinger: instead of giving speeches, he picks up an acoustic guitar and invites his audiences to sing along with his reactionary "protest" anthems. He's Pat Buchanan in Woody Guthrie's clothing, and what's scary about the movie is that this grotesque coupling doesn't even feel like a stretch. Robbins tosses off nasty satiric riffs at a reckless, headlong pace, and the movie, even at its most chilling, is hilarious; its humor is both precise enough to deflate its targets and goofy enough to feel liberating. And his performance as smiling Bob, although it's conceived as a caricature, is never tiresome: it's too finely detailed, and too gleeful. This terrifically entertaining movie represents something very unlikely and very welcome: liberal humor with sharp teeth. Also with Gore Vidal, Alan Rickman, Giancarlo Esposito, Brian Murray, and Ray Wise. The songs are by Tim Robbins and his brother, David.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/7/92.) (Gramercy, Sutton, Quad Cinema, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

Candyman—An intrepid female graduate student ventures into Chicago's inner city, camera in hand, and falls prey to a bogeyman who carves up disbelievers with a hook. The academic is that mischievous-eyed blonde Virginia Madsen, and the Candyman (Tony Todd) is black; the racial brinkmanship is the film's most original and effective gimmick. Madsen gives a juicy B-picture performance, throwing herself into each absurd display of hubris, but the movie is just a gory campfire tale. To generate any genuine fun, it needs to be seen in a city, at midnight. The writer-director, Bernard Rose, adapted Clive Barker's short story, "The Forbidden."—M.S. (10/19/92) (19th Street East 6, Gemini, Orpheum VII, Olympia, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex; through Nov. 5.)

1492: Conquest of Paradise—Ridley Scott's dead-in-the-water attempt to update and preserve the Columbus myth in the person of Gérard Depardieu. A virtuoso of the ersatz, Scott overdoses on fancy lighting and atmospheric fog and smoke effects, and overrelies on his composer, Vangelis, who whips up aural hurricanes. The movie is one huge objet d'non-art. The screenwriter, Roselyne Bosch, was formerly a reporter, and this script—her first—operates like checklist journalism as it steers a middle course between hero-worship and revisionism. With Sigourney Weaver (as Isabella), Armand Assante, Angela Molina, Fernando Rey, Michael Wincott, Tcheky Karyo, and Steven Waddington, the film combines American, British, Spanish, and French actors without adjusting for their jarring styles and accents. Depardieu has so little authority in English that when he rallies his sailors, you'd understand if they jumped overboard.—M.S. (10/19/92) (First & 62nd Cinemas, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ 19th Street East 6, and East 85th Street; through Nov. 5.)

Glengarry Glen Ross—David Mamet's 1984 Pulitzer Prize-winner—about real-estate salesmen who put the screws on hapless marks in order to keep their own ugly jobs—made ripping theatre, whatever else it was or wasn't. But the movie, set in the lean Bush years, spells out the characters' despair in cue cards, right from the start, and hammers away at the plot so relentlessly that you can feel the nails entering the back of your skull. Still, the performers provide relief. Ed Harris and Alan Arkin, as the sleek yet panicky Moss and the sad-sack Aaronow, turn their "Are we speaking or are we talking?" duet into an existential Abbott-and-Costello number. Al Pacino, as Roma, Mamet's Mr. Slick, is amusingly lordly: he's simultaneously high-handed and underhanded. And Kevin Spacey, as their steely office manager, Williamson, plants a daringly long fuse and ignites it with the smallest flicker. Only Jack Lemmon, as Shelley (the Machine) Levene, disappoints: he starts strong, but the director, James Foley, lets him drown in unearned emotion, as if this were Lemmon's shot at "Death of a Salesman." Mamet did his own adaptation, adding another ruthless person to the melodrama: a head-office hit man played by Alec Baldwin.—M.S. (10/5/92) (Village Theatre VII, Sutton, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and 57th St. Playhouse.)

Hero—Stephen Frears' new movie often feels like a remake of something from the thirties or forties. Its plot premise—an ordinary man is lionized by the media for a courageous act he didn't perform, and the actual hero can't get anyone to see the truth—provides the sort of material that Preston Sturges and Frank Capra liked to work with. And the script, an original by David Webb Peoples (who also wrote "Unforgiven"), even borrows from John Ford: in a sense, this picture is a screwball-comedy take on "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance." The movie is fascinating to watch, but most of the time you're sitting there wondering why this ingeniously constructed script isn't playing better. Simply stated, Peoples hasn't written many funny lines, and Frears' attempts to create comic business visually feel strained and unspontaneous. The filmmakers fail to supply the incidental pleasures and the joyous sense of immediacy that screwball farce—even ironic, subversive screwball farce—can't do without. Dustin Hoffman, who plays the real hero, doesn't get any kind of rhythm going until the movie is almost over; and Andy Garcia, as the faker, can't quite rise above his cryptically written role. But Geena Davis, as a hot-shot TV reporter, is smashing: she strikes a lovely balance between warmth and satiric precision, and holds it in the midst of the general chaos.—T.R. (10/5/92) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, Baronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

Husbands and Wives—Woody Allen's uncomfortably personal new movie renders the disso-

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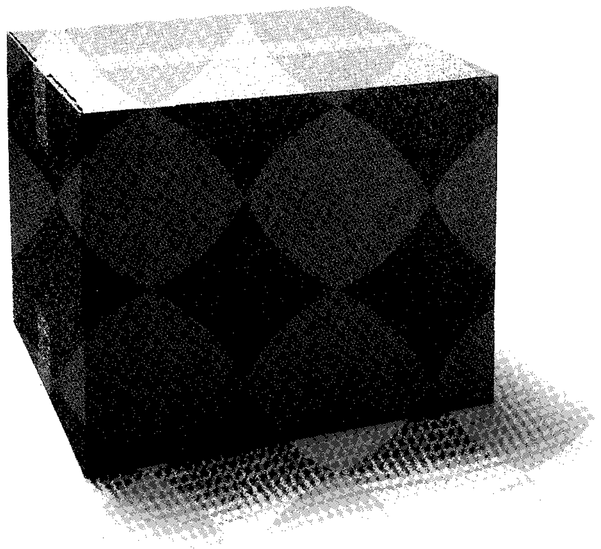

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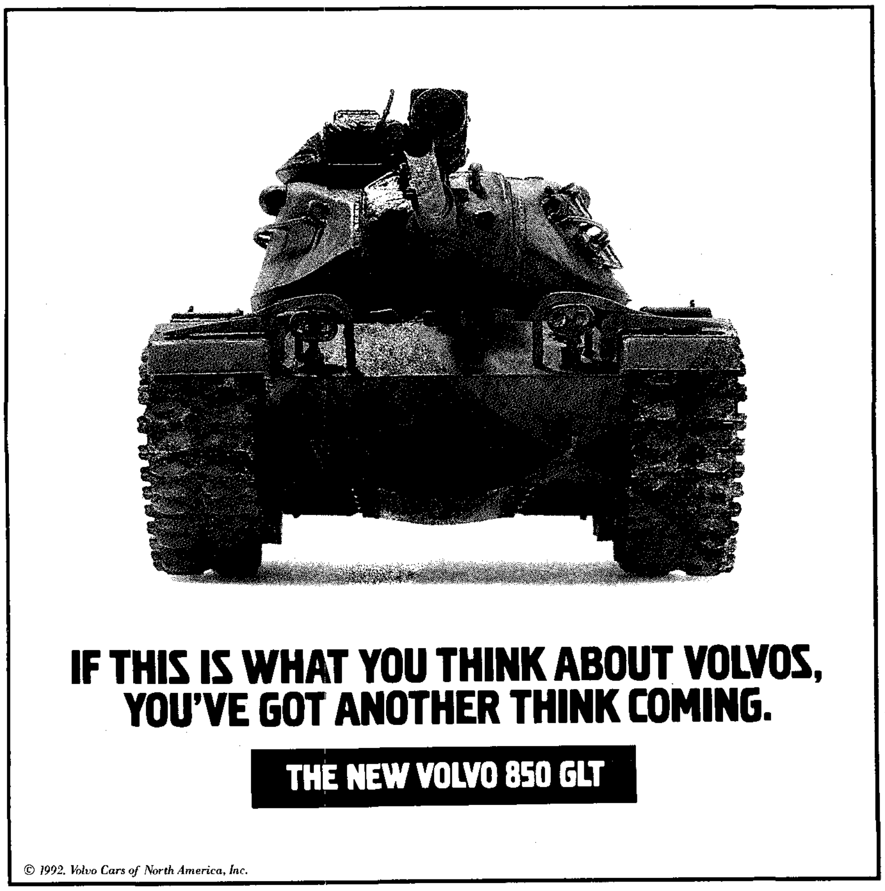
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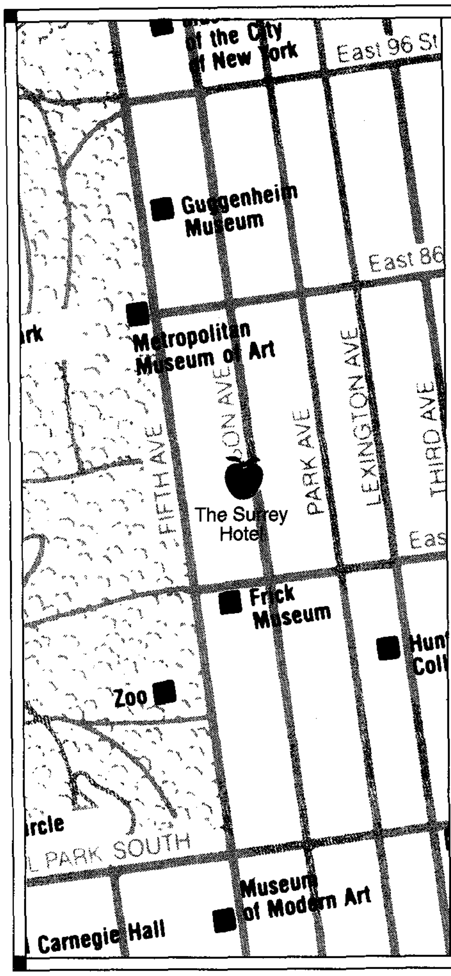
lution of a marriage in a style that's meant to look raw, rough-edged, truthful. He uses jump-cutting and wobbly hand-held camerawork to create the illusion of immediacy, of lifelike spontaneity and muddle. But the movie's vision of life isn't really very persuasive, and Allen isn't saying anything that he hasn't said before. The only thing that has changed since his late-seventies explorations of romantic futility (such as "Annie Hall" and "Manhattan") is the tone, which is now sour, dispirited, almost vindictive. The cinéma-vérité surface feels like a con, a razzle-dazzle cover for imaginative exhaustion. Both the style and the substance of this picture have a curdled quality, the air of things that have gone bad but haven't been thrown away. Except for Judy Davis's ebullient performance as a friend of the central couple, Gabe and Judy Roth (Allen and Mia Farrow), the movie's humor is surprisingly flat. Allen's gags and situations no longer betray even a trace of delight at the absurdities of human behavior: his bemused vision of romantic folly has turned, over the years, into a bilious take-my-wife-please routine. It's tempting to think of this bleakly nihilistic film as an expression of its creator's weariness with his own ideas. The most disturbing, and angering, thing about the picture is that Allen has transformed his disappointment in himself into disgust for other people: he's going down, and he's determined to take the rest of us with him. Also with Liam Neeson, Juliette Lewis, Sydney Pollack, Lysette Anthony, and Benno Schmidt.—T.R. (9/21/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, Beekman, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

KLUTE (1971)—Jane Fonda in possibly her finest dramatic performance, as Bree, an intelligent, high-bracket call girl, in Alan J. Pakula's murder-melodrama. The picture is reminiscent of the good detective mysteries of the forties—it has the lurking figures, the withheld information, the standard gimmick of getting the heroine to go off alone so she can be menaced (in this case, it's by a big-shot sadistic sex fiend), and so on. And there's no conviction in Pakula's use of those devices; they're hokum—the shadows and crazy camera angles are as silly as a fright wig. But at the center is a study of Bree's temperament and drives, and here the picture is modern. The life surrounding Bree's profession frightens her, but the work itself has peculiar compensations—she enjoys her power over her customers. She's maternal and provocative with them, confident and contemptuously cool. She's a different girl alone—huddled in bed in her disorderly room. The suspense plot involves the ways in which prostitutes attract the forces that destroy them. Bree's knowledge that as a prostitute she has nowhere to go but down and her mixed-up efforts to escape make her one of the strongest women characters to reach the screen. And Fonda is very exciting to watch: the closest closeup never reveals a false thought and, seen on the movie streets a block away, she's Bree, not Jane Fonda, walking toward us. With Donald Sutherland, Charles Cioffi, Roy Scheider, Dorothy Tristan, Rita Gam, Richard Shull, and Anthony Holland. Written by Andy and Dave Lewis.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 5.)

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS—In Michael Mann's version of James Fenimore Cooper's improbably durable tall tale, everybody looks great: the movie seduces us with haircuts and landscape. The hero of this melodramatic story of pre-Revolutionary America is Hawkeye (Daniel Day-Lewis), a rugged but sensitive individualist who roams the forest of the Hudson Valley in the company of two Indians, Chingachgook (Russell Means) and Uncas (Eric Schweig). The three men serve as guides and bodyguards for Cora and Alice Munro (Madeleine Stowe and Jodhi May), the maidenly daughters of a British officer. The Brits are at war with the French, but the greatest danger to Anglo-Saxon life and limb is posed by a band of bloodthirsty Indian guerrillas, led by a wily Huron named Magua (Wes Studi). The setup pretty much guarantees thrills, and Mann delivers the action-movie goods, but with a sort of abstract, lyrical pictorialism. Day-Lewis's Hawkeye—a cultured white man's dream of virile primitivism—is almost entirely a visual phenomenon, and it works. (He runs well, and sports a terrific mane of straight, stringy alternative-rocker hair.) The picture is awfully, solemnly silly, but it's enjoyable and even rather stirring. Also with Maurice Roëves and Steven Waddington.—T.R. (10/5/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Gotham Cinema, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, Regency, and National Twin.)

Mr. Saturday Night—Having your joke and eating it, too—that's what Billy Crystal manages to pull off, repeatedly, in this sprawling, laughing-through-tears extravaganza (his directorial début). As Buddy Young, Jr., whom he created ten years ago and developed on "Saturday Night Live" and HBO specials, Crystal pays homage to the Borscht Belt masters of disrespect who brought their tumultuous brand of vulgar, irreverent clowning into the American mainstream during the Golden Age of Television. The Buddy of this movie is sharper and funnier than his previous incarnations: at times, he's a showcase for Crystal's own crack wit and inventiveness. Crystal and his co-writers (Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel) aim to get behind the ironic mask of this Yiddish harlequin and reveal the fierce ambition and bitterness that fuel his put-downs. Crystal is fairly tough about Buddy's self-destructive drive and his parasitic relationship with his brother and right-hand man, Stan (David Paymer). But he also wants to honor Jewish roots, building to a family-reconciliation finish. What saves the film from terminal mawkishness is the chemistry between Crystal and that remarkable actor, Paymer. Crystal's Buddy is always pitching, sometimes wildly. Paymer's Stan is always catching, and, in a subtle, self-abnegating way, calling the shots. With Julie Warner, Mary Maya, Helen Hunt, and Ron Silver.—M.S. (10/5/92) (First & 62nd Cinemas, and Ziegfeld. . . . ¶ Orpheum VII; through Nov. 10.)

My New Gun—The heroine of Stacy Cochran's movie is a young New Jersey housewife named Debbie Bender (Diane Lane) whose husband buys her a revolver she doesn't want. This husband, Gerald (Stephen Collins), is a smug radiologist who dominates his wife completely: when he announces that the Bender household—a condo overlooking a golf course—needs a firearm, that's it. Cochran's screenplay delights in fouling up the audience's expectations. It constructs a kind of inverted pyramid of unlikeliness, the whole thing balanced, precariously, on the initial absurdity of Gerald's decision. The real subject of the picture is Debbie's changing relationship to the circumstances of her life, and especially her marriage. The gun itself is a little more than a pretext and a lot less than a symbol: it serves mostly to get her involved in the mysterious life of her across-the-street neighbor, Skippy (James LeGros), a scruffy, shifty-eyed young man who has a big crush on her. LeGros is wonderfully sly and seductive, and Diane Lane's delicately funny performance conveys the movie's exploratory sensibility with thrilling clarity: she makes us feel the risky joy of venturing beyond your own narrow plot and becoming a part of someone else's story. Cochran—a recent film-school graduate—gives the dull suburban setting a surprising richness and beauty. Her condoland isn't a satirist's world, or a cartoonist's, or a fairy-tale teller's; it's more like a novelist's. Yet the sort of liberation that this picture proposes, and embodies, is the product of a true filmmaker's vision. Also with Tess Harper, Maddie Corman, Bruce Altman, and Bill Raymond. Ed Lachman's cinematography is terrific.—T.R. (11/2/92) (Angelika Film Center.)



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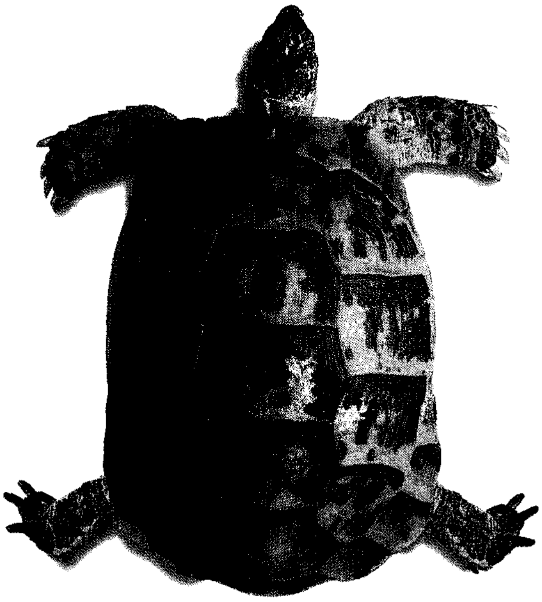

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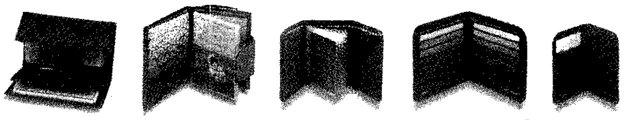

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IN BRIEF—Cont'd

Night and the City—A remake, directed by Irwin Winkler and written by Richard Price, of Jules Dassin's terrific 1950 film noir. The filmmakers and their star, Robert De Niro, try to tap the Scorsese vein of kinetic urban violence, out-of-control male energy, and brooding, pessimistic wit. Everyone involved in the picture has a formidable résumé, but what they've put on the screen is wan, washed-out, blurry—a photocopy of a fax of a carbon of something that was once clear and bold. As in the original film, the story is about a small-time hustler who foolishly invades the turf of a powerful sports promoter and is decisively slapped down for his efforts. Price and Winkler make only the most glancing attempt to re-create the tone of Dassin's movie; they turn the story into a comedy about a lovable loser, a New York motormouth who is supposed to charm us with his indefatigable optimism. Winkler moves the camera constantly, fills the soundtrack with old rock and roll and R. & B., and tries hard to create a gritty atmosphere of low-life New York desperation, but everything he does looks mechanical, as if it had been learned by rote. Price's deft verbal riffing is just decorative. And De Niro's performance, in a role that Richard Widmark played brilliantly in the 1950 version, produces a perfect vacuum at the center of the picture. Also with Jessica Lange, Cliff Gorman, Alan King, Jack Warden, and Eli Wallach.—T.R. (10/19/92) (Coronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Criterion Center.)

Of Mice and Men—The director and co-star, Gary Sinise, has been quoted as saying, "I saw the 1939 film version and it was such a product of its time that it meant nothing to me. I thought Lon Chaney, Jr., was real hammy." Actually, Lewis Milestone's version of John Steinbeck's tragic fable, with Burgess Meredith as the shrewd ranch hand George and Chaney as the simple giant Lennie, is a wonderfully wrought classic. This new movie, adapted by Horton Foote—with Sinise as George and John Malkovich as Lennie—is the one that goes high on the hog. Led by Sinise, who edges his profile into every shot as if he were a model in a rustic-clothing catalogue, and Malkovich, who carries on like a further infantilized Tommy Smothers (his upper register recalls Tweety Pie), the cast acts with self-conscious, surface physicality. Ray Walston fits right in with the histrionics on this film's Steppenwolf Ranch; even Joe Morton catches the overacting bug. At least Casey Siemaszko is down-to-earth as the bully, Curley, but for all the talk of humanizing his flirty wife, Sinise hangs Sherilyn Fenn out to dry. The only restrained performance is given by Lennie's pup.—M.S. (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Waverly, and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . ¶ Carnegie Hall Cinema; through Nov. 5.)

The Public Eye—Inspired by the tabloid-news photographer Weegee, this oddball reverie, set in New York circa 1942, is gorgeous and disappointing. It gets rolling early, then stops cold. When Barbara Hershey, the widow of a fancy-nightclub owner, gets Joe Pesci, a notorious, artistic shutterbug, to investigate a mystery man, the audience is eager to see his hardscrabble vision of life put to use in detective work. But the writer-director, Howard Franklin, comes up with a suspense plot that bogs down in details. While just about all the actors make good impressions—including Pesci, who imbues the hero with acute street reflexes and surprising sensitivity—only Stanley Tucci, as a low-level mobster, and Jerry Adler, as a self-loathing columnist turned playwright, tap any subterranean emotions. What sustains the movie is Franklin's loving, complex evocation of the period; the real world and the photo world bleed into each other, sometimes literally. Peter Suschitzky did the sumptuous, dark-toned cinematography.—M.S. (10/19/92) (34th St. East, First & 62nd Cinemas, Art

Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and Metro Cinema.)

Reservoir Dogs—Most of the action in Quentin Tarantino's pulp crime movie takes place in a cavernous warehouse, to which the surviving participants of a botched jewelry heist have repaired to lick their wounds. The crooks amuse themselves by accusing each other of treachery (*someone* tipped off the police), waving their guns, screaming obscenities, and torturing a cop whom one of them has captured. This is, explicitly, a man's world. Tarantino emphasizes the characters' absurdity; they're all presented as demented children, little boys with big guns. He wants us to feel as if we had crack-landed in an alternate universe: the Planet of the Goons. The movie runs on film-school cleverness—a homemade pharmaceutical cocktail of pop music, visual jolts, and allusions to Scorsese and Peckinpah. As super-cool young directors go, Tarantino (whose first film this is) is fairly engaging: his nihilism is antic and oddly cheery. But the picture is less than the sum of its outrageous gags and inventive bits of business. This is a reasonably lively picture about nothing, and that's apparently just what it was meant to be. With Harvey Keitel, Tim Roth, Steve Buscemi, Michael Madsen, Lawrence Tierney, and Chris Penn.—T.R. (10/19/92) (Village Theatre VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

A River Runs Through It—Robert Redford's movie of Norman Maclean's lyrical novella about fly-fishing and family loyalty in Montana is serene, lulling, tranquil—no, it's dead dull. Maclean's story traces the history of its narrator's relationship with his self-destructive kid brother, Paul, through detailed descriptions of their fishing trips; the narrative is driven by the tension between what it's telling us and what it's leaving out. Disastrously, Redford and screenwriter Richard Friedenberg open up the story. They show us too much of what's happening offstage—that is, away from the river—and thus allow the real source of the story's emotions to dissipate. With a delicately balanced narrative like this one, more is inevitably less. The movie is ravishingly shot (by Philippe Rousselot), but it's lifeless, because it lacks the vital spirit of Maclean's writing: the precision and grace that he seems to have learned, in part, from fly-fishing. Redford and Friedenberg try to catch the story's elusive meanings by lobbing grenades into the river and blowing everything in it out into the light of day. With Craig Sheffer as the narrator, Norman, and Brad Pitt (who looks like a young Redford and gives a lightweight performance) as Paul. The supporting cast includes Emily Lloyd, Tom Skerritt, Stephen Shellen, Nicole Burdette, Brenda Blethyn, and Susan Traylor.—T.R. (10/19/92) (Village Theatre VII, New York Twin, and Columbus Circle.)

Sarafina!—It promises to adopt a daring street-cabaret approach to the Soweto children's rebellion in 1976. But after a couple of big numbers shot and cut in the ragged, grabby style of "Fame," the movie version of Mbongeni Ngema's musical drama settles into a conventional coming-of-political-age story. Inspired by an idealistic teacher (played by Whoopi Goldberg, who can't overcome the coy virtuousness of the role), the lead schoolgirl, Sarafina (Leleti Khumalo), unites her reverence for Nelson Mandela and her dreams of school-show stardom, eventually joining the mass youth demonstrations against apartheid and the official curriculum. The writers, William Nicholson and Ngema, and the director, Darrell James Roodt, take admirable positions against violence as well as oppression. But their film is caught between stylized protest and messagey melodrama.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Embassy.)

Singles—Cameron Crowe's second film as a writer-director (the first was the lovely 1989 teen comedy "Say Anything") is a buoyant, sweet-tempered little picture about the ro-

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IN BRIEF—Cont'd

mantic confusions of some young Seattle apartment-dwellers. It's an ensemble piece, the sort of movie that flits from character to character like a hummingbird. Crowe's touch is so light that you may, in the end, feel a bit unsatisfied—disappointed that the movie's buzzing comic vitality starts to lose its resonance the moment you leave the theatre. This is romantic comedy of the wispiest kind, but the picture is generous, graceful, and consistently funny. Campbell Scott and Kyra Sedgwick play Steve and Linda, idealistic yuppies in love, and both prove to be wonderfully deft comedians. And Matt Dillon, as Cliff, the rather dim leader of a band called Citizen Dick, is hilarious. But the standout in Crowe's energetic cast is Bridget Fonda, who plays Janet, a bubbly underachiever inexplicably smitten with Cliff. Fonda is a true original: she brings such reckless, joyous abandon to Janet's pursuit of the unlikely object of desire that she transforms this desperate-love story line into something exuberantly optimistic. This movie shows that Cameron Crowe is a rare bird, too: a sunny realist.—T.R. (First & 62nd Cinemas, and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . ¶ Village Theatre VII, Orpheum VII, and Festival; through Nov. 5.)

SALE
SALE
SALE

James LeGros and Diane Lane in "My New Gun"

DAVID SMALL

Sneakers—The director, Phil Alden Robinson ("Field of Dreams"), attempts to fashion a liberal thriller-comedy about a group of high-tech security analysts, led by Robert Redford. Under pressure from the National Security Agency, Redford agrees to steal a device that can decode any computer program in the private and public sectors. His character is a sixties survivor (one of the first computer pranksters) who has teamed up with four other overgrown, misfit boys: Sidney Poitier as a canned C.I.A. agent, River Phoenix as an ethereal computer-age juvenile delinquent, Dan Aykroyd as an ex-con gadget freak, and David Strathairn as a blind master of sound tracing. The filmmakers haven't given them the distinctive interplay and kicky gimmicks that can make a comic-book ensemble tickle the fantasy bone. They're a liberal dream team as neutered alternative family, with Redford's love interest, Mary McDonnell, as den mother. The film's smug anti-Republican humor won't win any crossover votes. "Sneakers" exploits an audience's fear of the microchip revolution, then ends up celebrating computer sabotage in the service of progressive causes. It plays into the hands of its enemies; it says that left-wingers *are* a self-righteous élite. With Ben Kingsley.—M.S. (9/21/92) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

South Central—Tossed into theatres without publicity, this is a tough-minded and affecting melodrama. It sees life in the 'hood as a survival drama, plain and simple, and pleads for family responsibility and nonviolence as its inhabitants' last chance. The writer-director, Steve Anderson, and his key players—Glenn Plummer and Bryon Keith Minns as gang leaders, Carl Lumbly as Plummer's jailhouse mentor, and Christian Coleman as Plummer's ten-year-old son—give their three-act story stouthearted conviction. They try to flash a warning signal about the dead-end values of gang life and at the same time leave viewers with an inspirational message about the power of paternal love. Despite some bald didactic stretches, they succeed.—M.S. (11/2/92) (Criterion Center; through Nov. 5.)

Three Days of the Condor (1975)—The director, Sydney Pollack, doesn't have a knack for action pulp; he gets some tension going in this expensive spy thriller (and it was a box-office success), but there's no real fun in it. It may leave you feeling depressed or angry. Robert Redford plays a New York-based researcher for the C.I.A. who accidentally turns up a clue to the existence of a renegade conspiratorial network within the C.I.A. organization and becomes everybody's target. With a miscast, subdued Faye Dunaway as a photographer who shoots bare, wintry scenes and is meant to be half in love with death. Not a girl to jazz things up. In the film's high point of flossy artistry, Redford and Dunaway go to bed together, and their coitus is visualized for us in a series of her lonely, ghostly pictures. Also with Max von Sydow, Cliff Robertson, and John Houseman. Cinematography by Owen Roizman; the script by Lorenzo Semple, Jr., and David Rayfiel was adapted from James Grady's "Six Days of the Condor."—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 5.)

The Three Faces of Eve (1957)—Joanne Woodward's big one—her Academy Award-winning role as the drab Southern housewife and mother with a splintered personality. The heroine calls herself Eve White when she's good and Eve Black when she's bad and sexy, and has yet another personality—that of the upstanding, intelligent woman whom the writer-producer-director, Nunnally Johnson, approves of. Shallow, but the gimmick is appealing, and Woodward's showmanship is very likable. With Lee J. Cobb and David Wayne, and an introduction by Alistair Cooke. Adapted from a book by two doctors: C. H. Thigpen and H. M. Cleckley.—P.K. (Tribeca Cinema; starting Nov. 11.)

Traces of Red—With James Belushi, Lorraine Bracco, and Tony Goldwyn; directed by Andy Wolk. (See illustration on page 26.) (Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and National Twin; starting Nov. 11.)

Victim (1961)—This pioneering attempt to create public sympathy for homosexuals and to publicize the English laws that put them in jeopardy is ingenious, moralistic, and moderately amusing. Structurally, it's a slick thriller about a blackmail ring that preys on homosexuals. There's a terribly self-conscious attempt to distinguish between the "love" that the barrister hero (Dirk Bogarde) feels for his wife (Sylvia Sims) and the physical desire—presumably a lower order of emotion—that he once felt for a young man (Peter McEnery), who appears to be more interesting in every way than the wife. The plot requires the barrister to sacrifice his career—to confess his own homosexuality—in order to trap the blackmailers. Basil Dearden directed, from a screenplay by Janet Green and John McCormick. With Dennis Price and Hilton Edwards. The film marked a turning point in Bogarde's career; having been an actor for over twenty years, he was tired of playing boyishly charming, happy, bouncy roles ("I was the Loretta Young of England," he said), and this time he acted his age in what was, in those years, a daring role.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 10.)

Waterland—Tom Crick (Jeremy Irons), the protagonist and narrator of Stephen Gyllenhaal's film, is a middle-aged history teacher immobilized by his own past—by the dire events of his wartime adolescence in the fen country of East Anglia. The 1983 novel, by Graham Swift, from which the picture has been adapted is a determinedly inward-looking work: unpromising material for a film. And this hero—a hopeless, defeated, rumpled-corduroy man, marking time as he slides inexorably toward decrepitude and merciful oblivion—isn't the sort that movie audiences tend to clasp to their bosoms. Yet the picture is, in its gray way, absorbing and often moving. The screenwriter, Peter Prince, has streamlined the novel's twisty narrative very intelligently. (He retains the book's juiciest, most lurid episodes.) Gyllenhaal's direction is occasionally too studied, but it has some drive. And the actors are awfully good. Grant Warnock and Lena Headey, the young performers who play Tom and his wife-to-be in flashback sequences, bring a convincing and touching adolescent gravity to their roles. Irons imparts a whiff of something like madness to his character's middle-aged desperation, and thus saves it from seeming just another incarnation of the dull, low-horizon resignation familiar to audiences of English films and fiction about educated losers. His performance lifts the movie to the top of the rueful-retrospection class.—T.R. (11/2/92) (Lincoln Plaza.)

Zebrahead—This interracial teen romance set in Detroit makes a fumbling plea for integration and tolerance. For about forty minutes, you're willing to go along with its loose style and predictable storytelling, partly because of the fresh young cast and novel Motor City locations, and partly because the writer-director, Anthony Drazan, suggests that there could be a lasting bond between his Jewish Romeo, Zack (Michael Rapaport), and his black Juliet, Nikki (N'Bushe Wright). But even the early sequences show evidence of trickle-down portentousness. And when Zack's white ex-girlfriend invites him and Nikki to an otherwise all-white party, the movie begins a downward spiral into West Side Storyland. In a mere hundred minutes, the director takes two likable, potentially complex characters and reduces them to poster kids promoting racial understanding. With standout support from the charismatic Ray Sharkey as Zack's widowed, randy dad, and Ron Johnson as a volatile hoodlum named Nut.—M.S. (11/2/92) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, 59th Street East Cinema, and Orpheum VII. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through Nov. 5. . . . ¶ Embassy; starting Nov. 6.)

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

BATTLE FATIGUE

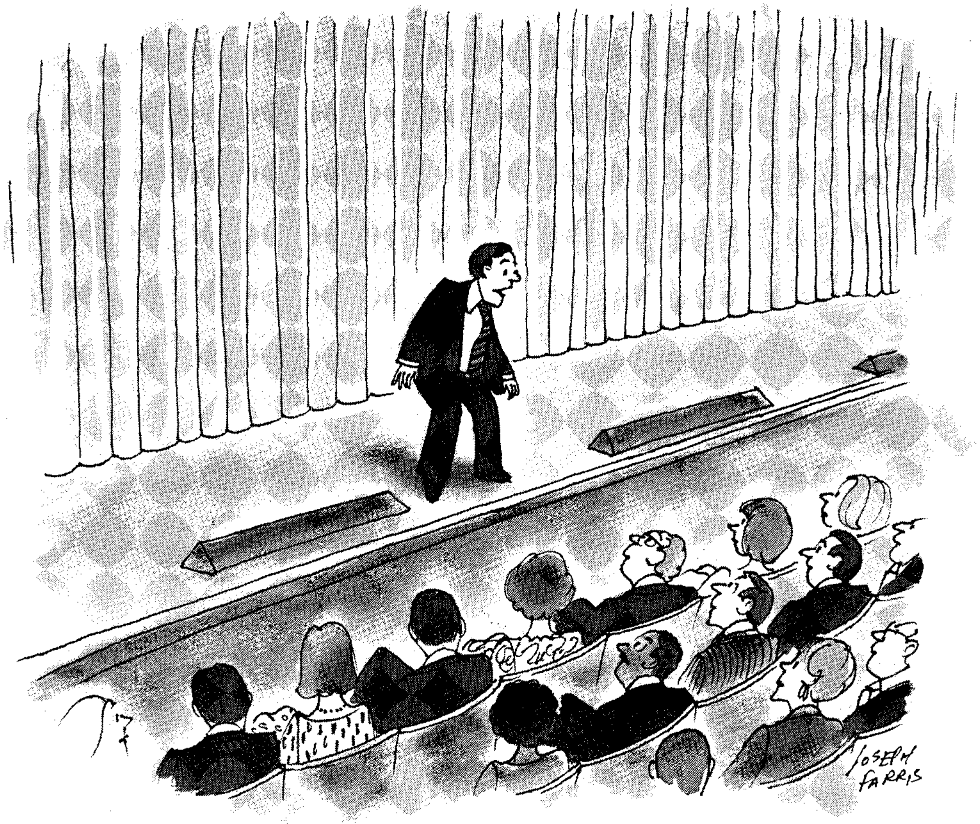
Five years ago, Peter Staley abandoned his job as a Wall Street bond trader to become a hot-shot fund-raiser for the AIDS activist group ACT UP, and he also emerged as one of the leaders of its Treatment and Data Committee, which became instrumental in reforming the policies of the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health. Staley, a wealthy white businessman, was an unusual recruit to grass-roots politics. He persuaded ACT UP to mass-market T-shirts bearing its slogan, "Silence=Death," and solicited donations by direct mail—tactics that were initially greeted as politically incorrect but helped accelerate the startling momentum of ACT UP.

The original New York chapter, founded in 1987, spawned sister organizations in other cities, some of them overseas, and the group brought the issue of AIDS to center stage by mounting smart, brash protests. Staley got himself and four other ACT UP members onto the floor of the Stock Exchange, for example, and they handcuffed themselves to a balcony railing, blew foghorns, and unfurled a large banner urging traders to sell Burroughs Wellcome stock, because the company was charging astronomical amounts for the drug AZT. Later, three members of ACT UP sneaked onto the set of "The CBS Evening News" and disrupted the broadcast, while over at PBS additional members were attempting unsuccessfully to chain themselves to Robert MacNeil, of "The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour." At other protests, seas of people turned up wearing googly-eyed Cardinal O'Connor masks or spacey George Bush faces. By creating vivid controversies, ACT UP has inspired speedier trials of new drugs, and, most recently, it played a part in forcing the government to acknowledge tens of thousands of cases of AIDS among women and intravenous-drug users whose illnesses hadn't been included in the official definition of the disease. "Perhaps because of the need, the tragedy, without knowing it we were making history," says the playwright Larry Kramer, who founded the original group. "We were able to work together in harmony in a way that members of the gay and lesbian community had never seen before. The love and respect of each for each was so heavy it was tangible."

But the world of political organizing is a volatile one. Rancorous factional disputes in the last two years helped bring about the departure of Staley and other prominent activists last winter and left ACT UP's New York chapter a smaller, poorer, and less effective organization. In a recent series about its troubles, *QW*, a gay-oriented magazine, cited membership and fund-raising figures that tell the story eloquently: the number of people who attend the group's weekly meeting—formerly the place to be on Monday nights if you were gay and lived in New York—dropped from seven hundred at its peak, two years ago, to a hundred and fifty earlier this year; the amount of money raised decreased from a million dollars two years ago to a fourth of that amount this year; and the number of demonstrations staged by the group has slipped. Kramer, who is among the disenchanted, says of the current meetings, "It's like going to Miami and seeing all the old folks on the beach—you recognize the faces, but that's about it. All the energy is gone." Some members consider this an overstatement and claim to see signs of a revival, but even they recognize that there has been a decline. In the face of the Bush Administration's unreceptive attitude, and of the seemingly insurmountable medical challenges posed by AIDS, some members just lost hope. Others, including some of the group's key figures, died of the disease. Membership also dwindled because some members went to work on AIDS-related causes full time.

And, inevitably, there was infighting, as compli-

SCOTT MENCHIN



"Is there a spin doctor in the house?"

• •

cated issues were hashed out in large groups. In particular, there was a history of tension between ACT UP's Treatment and Data Committee and the New York chapter as a whole. Treatment activists on the committee, like Mark Harrington and Jim Eigo, are so well educated on the subject of AIDS that they are considered honorary scientists. Kramer, a treatment activist himself, recalls a meeting between members of the committee and executives of the pharmaceutical company Bristol-Myers: "Mark would go in, and Jim, too—they never took baths, and they smoked incessantly, and they looked like terrorists, but they opened their mouths and you couldn't believe the quality of the knowledge that came out." In a way, that very expertise created friction. Government officials tended to accord credibility only to activists well versed in the medical issues, most of whom happened to be gay white men, and those activists were subsequently criticized for failing to speak for other people with AIDS, who lacked the time and resources to study the disease themselves. Most treatment activists will tell you that they tried to do so, and they say that it was hard, after working around the clock, to come to the weekly meetings and be greeted like the enemy. There was jealousy, too—some members resented the attention accorded the prominent treatment activists—and no formal mechanism had ever been created by which to settle the disputes.

Last January, Staley led a dozen prominent members to break with ACT UP's New York chapter and form an autonomous organization called the Treatment Action Group, or TAG. It wasn't an easy decision. "I think that forming TAG was not a happy experience for any TAG members," he says. "All of us were freaked out by it. ACT UP was my family. It was also my life support. It was my social life. It was everything to me. I left Wall Street for ACT UP. I really felt that the organization was keeping me alive. Feeling that that family had turned against me, and that there were enemies in the family, was devastating." In an effort to avoid infighting, TAG admits members only by invitation—a policy that is anathema to many in ACT UP. But among the accomplishments of TAG has been an extensive report on the N.I.H.'s AIDS budget, outlining inefficiencies and redundancies in government spending. The group is also preparing a report on the gaps in the understanding of AIDS and is identifying scientists who are willing to do the necessary research.

TAG is not the first independent organization to evolve from ACT UP—early initiatives on housing and on needle exchange also grew into full-fledged autonomous entities—but the members of TAG were among the group's stars, and their decision to work independently has raised questions about the future of ACT UP as a whole. Kramer says, "We conquered the world, but we failed utterly, and I don't know how else to say it." But Ann Northrop, a long-time member who remains involved, says, "I don't think TAG's splitting off destroyed ACT UP at all. Any movement like this has to have constant turnover of personnel. No one person is indispensable."

BULLY PULPITS

THERE can be no more peaceful retreat from the rush-hour bustle of Fifth Avenue than the cool, dark, Gothic interior of the great Episcopal church of Saint Thomas, at the corner of West Fifty-third Street. It is very quiet in there on weekday mornings: no choirboys singing, no organ playing, no wails of lamentation from an upper-class congregation feeling guilty about its wealth—no distractions at all, in fact, to trouble a mind in search of rest. But just inside the entrance there is a dangerous temptation—copies of the rector's sermons, for twenty-five cents each. One would hardly dare to give so little (if one were to think of giving anything at all) to the bundle of old blankets and matted hair crouched reproachfully at the foot of the church steps. Just twenty-five cents for a sermon by the Reverend Dr. John Andrew, former chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury and sponsor of the world première of Andrew Lloyd

Webber's Requiem Mass? What a bargain!

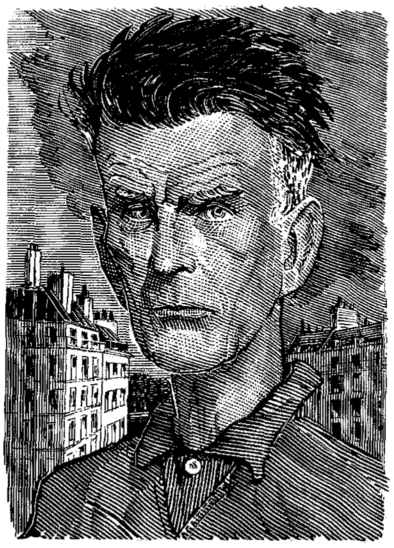
Be wary, however. There is one sermon that will break the tranquillity and reëxpose you with dramatic suddenness to the outside world. Its title, "A Question of Character," would have served just as well as a *Times* headline over the Presidential-campaign coverage of the last week; and, as it turned out, the so-called character issue in the election was what had inspired Dr. Andrew's address. "What makes you think that politicians are to be believed?" he asked. "Do you recall an election campaign where the question of character has ever loomed so large in the consciousness of the electorate?" After running in fearless detail through the various character failings of which both Governor Clinton and President Bush have been rightly or wrongly accused, the rector concluded that for all three candidates, including Ross Perot, "there can be no peace, there can be no togetherness, there can be no integrity without the salvation and pulling-together and re-creation of the forgiving God through Jesus Christ Our Lord."

This sermon was preached on October 4th, and two weeks later the character question got another passionate airing, on the Op-Ed page of the *Times*, in what was effectively a sermon by James Bond Stockdale 2d, a schoolteacher and the son of Ross Perot's Vice-Presidential running mate, Admiral James Bond Stockdale 1st. Young Stockdale reflected bitterly on the mockery generated by his father's dozy, incoherent performance in the televised Vice-Presidential debate, saying that the public reaction had shown that "courage, integrity and common sense will not be tolerated by our national political process," and that therefore American civilization was surely doomed. "There is one thing I *do* know," he said in conclusion. "If and when we try to save ourselves, we will turn to men and women who likely lack polish but whom we know we can trust. Men with hearts and minds filled with real character to lead. Men like my dad."

After reading this, many people, especially among Dr. Andrew's parishioners, were doubtless appalled by the realization that they didn't actually want Stockdale's dad to be their leader—that, on the contrary, the very thought of his taking office paralyzed them with terror.

BECKETT'S LAST BOOK

A FAN once bounced up to Samuel Beckett and proclaimed, "I've been reading your books all my life." Back came the reply "You must be very tired." Now Beckett, who died in 1989, is set to compound our fatigue from beyond the grave, with the publication of his early novel "Dream of Fair to middling Women." This is no long-lost manuscript, though, but one that has long been hidden in the archives of Dartmouth College. In 1986, the author considered bringing the text to light, then thought better (or worse) of it, and decided that he should die first.



The Dubliner

ELLIOTT BANFIELD

This posthumous work is having a difficult birth, however, unattended by Beckett's usual publisher, London's John Calder. "The edition should not have come out," Calder says, and adds darkly, "If Beckett had been alive today, none of this would have happened." Given that Beckett himself wasn't always certain of the difference between life and death, that may be pushing it. In any event, the Black Cat Press, of Dublin, has printed eight thousand copies, with a preface by Beckett's friend Eoin O'Brien, but disciples must travel to Dublin for a glimpse of the Grail. Plans for international distribution have been delayed. All in all, obtaining a copy of "Dream" is like visiting France in 1922 in search of "Ulysses."

That thought would have thrilled the young Beckett, who was so devoted to Joyce that he would squeeze into cramped shoes in an effort to match his feet to those of the Master. "Dream of Fair to middling Women" was written in Paris, at the Trianon Palace, on the Rue de Vaugirard, in the summer of 1932, when Beckett was twenty-six. He was penniless, and was creating a work that nobody would buy for sixty years: a wretched life, and one that slots with embarrassing ease into our vision of the struggling writer.

In turn, Beckett has made struggling readers of us all. Those preparing for "Dream" should brush up their French, rub down their German, speak Latin around the house for a few days. The tale tells of Belacqua, a young man who wrestles his lusts and learning across vocabularies and continents before a final "relapse into Dublin." At one point, the hero throws up on the boots of a Civic Guard. That much is clear, but no more. And what sounds like masturbation could well be a fit of weeping—something sad, at any rate.

Still, all roads lead from here. Beckett is already stung by the memories of infancy that will, over time, grow to intolerable pangs: "That was in the blue-eyed days when they rode down to the sea on bicycles." Desires crowd Belacqua's brain, not least the wish to do nothing at all, just as the young Sam did, laid out like a corpse for hours on his Dublin bed. Beckett called the book "the chest into which I threw my wild thought." Opened at last, it brims with treasures.

—ANTHONY LANE

They must have felt shamefully lacking in good character themselves. They should relax and stop worrying. Back out on the sidewalk, proceeding down Fifth Avenue past the beggar and the "Going Out of Business" signs, one might reasonably question young Stockdale's statement "The issues are not the issue. Character is the issue." But, even if you agree with him, you know perfectly well that what he and Dr. Andrew mean by "character" is something quite different from what the voters have in mind. Whatever the voters admire as character in a politician, they do not confuse it with virtue. Virtue doesn't get things done. Virtue is what we look for in clergymen and retired admirals.

WILD AT HEART

THESE days, you can hardly watch a nature show on TV without stumbling on fornicating reptiles or rampaging mammals. Take the documentary about migrating wildebeests in the Serengeti which Dennis B. Kane is working on for ABC. It features a vicious attack on a wildebeest herd by a pack of wild dogs, a wildebeest sinking under water as crocodiles swarm around it, and a baby wildebeest being lugged up a tree by a hungry leopard. Meanwhile, public television's program "Nature" is planning a six-part series on animal sex, called "The Second Imperative" (surviving is the first imperative, procreating the second) and scheduled to run next year. Fred Kaufman, the executive producer of "Nature," denies that the sex is "graphic." "There's all sorts of ways of passing on your genes," he says. "Some of it's under water, not at all sexy—it's scientific." But the series does include a sequence about bonobo monkeys, which are believed to be the only primates besides human beings that have sex just for pleasure.

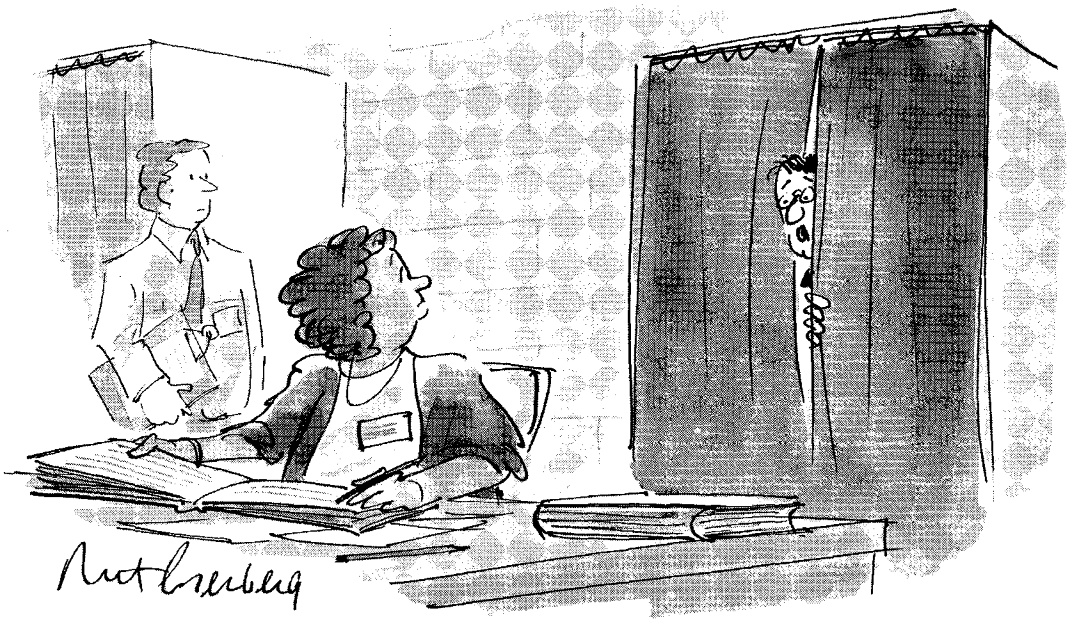
Television's concentration on sex and violence in the animal kingdom is often said to date from the autumn of 1991, when Time Life Video & Television acquired distribution rights to "The Trials of Life," a twelve-part nature series by the British naturalist David Attenborough. Time Life's trailer for the film might have been a cross between "Jaws" and "9 1/2 Weeks" and was sent out with a warning that the material to come might not be appropriate for very young viewers. Sales of "The Trials of Life" videos were six times those of other wildlife tapes distributed by Time Life, and the series outsold all other nontheatrical categories of Time Life videos. Ever since, some critics think, the producers of wildlife shows have been including footage that would once have been X-rated. Clare Beavan, a producer for the BBC's "The Late Show," who is working on a mini-documentary about the phenomenon, says, "Three kills before the title credits—that's a rule. See the whales slay their young, see the lions eat their cubs. Predators are in. If you ask people in the wildlife business 'What's in?' they'll say 'Predators,' and if you ask them what kind they'll say 'The three "F"s—fins, fur, and fangs.' Ants are out."

Despite the somewhat steamy agenda for next year's "Nature," Kaufman thinks that the notion that there's been a big increase in sex and violence is overblown. "What we are seeing with the marketing of 'The Trials of Life' proves that violence sells," he concedes. "I believe that some of the most beautiful animals are predators—look at lions and polar bears. But for every panther film out there you have an equally beautiful elephant film, which maybe has a little bit of sex but no violence. If you have a good story, it will sell. In lieu of a good story, then violence and sex help."

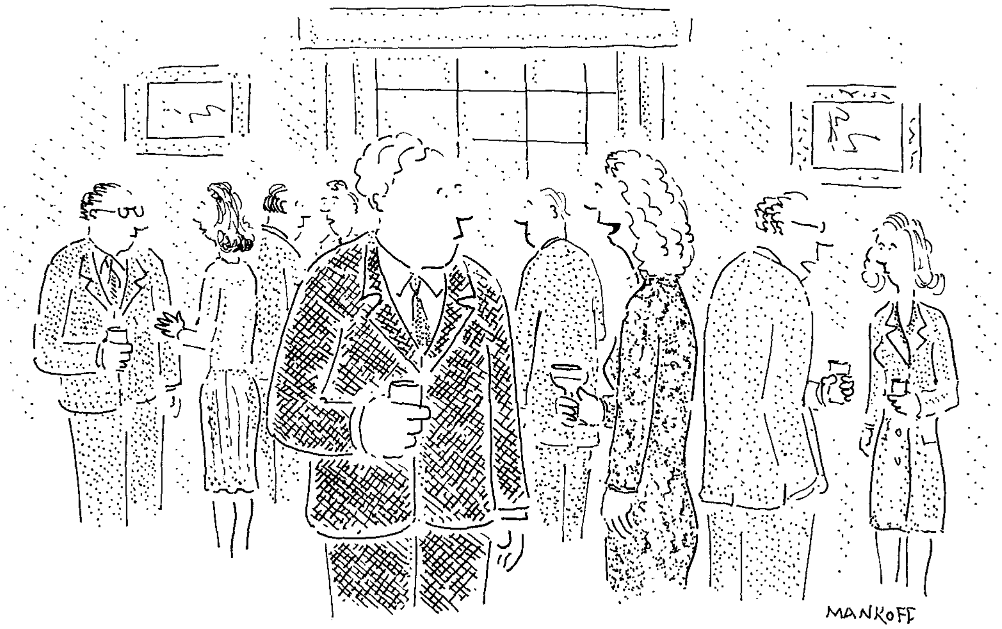
But, indisputably, times have changed. Ten years ago, Dennis Kane was the head of *National Geographic's* television division, and he remembers being made to cut from a nature film a scene in which a large snake pounced on and swallowed several fat frogs in succession. Today, the same footage would be acclaimed a coup. "Slowly, we've increased the pitch, the level," Kane says. "We're beyond Bambi—let's put it that way."

IMPERIAL COMEBACK

ON November 19th, the Russian Mission to the United Nations, on East Sixty-seventh Street, will be the setting for a party that "would have been quite unthinkable a few years ago," as Arcadi Nebolsine, one of the party's organizers, puts it. Nebolsine, the grandson of a courtier to Russia's last czar, is a member of the Russian Nobility Association and a man who characterizes the First World War, with gentle emphasis, as "a fatal mistake." Until recently, he says, he would never have been on speaking terms with diplomats from his ancestral homeland. For the past several months, however, he has been negotiating with Uli M. Vorontsov, Russia's Permanent Rep-



"Hey, I don't see Harry Truman's name on the ballot!"



"Is Madonna amazing or what? She sings, dances, and acts, and now it turns out she's a writer, too."

• •

resentative to the United Nations, to bring about a one-time showing of paintings at the Mission by a largely unheralded thirty-nine-year-old American artist named Richard Osterweil. The style of the paintings—lyrical, pastel-toned, and naïvely representational—will probably startle no one, but their subject matter, given the context in which they will be displayed, is at least slightly revolutionary. Or counter-revolutionary. Inspired exclusively by photographs taken before 1917, the works portray Nicholas II, his wife, Alexandra, and their four children relaxing in imperial style at their summer and winter palaces and on their royal yacht.

"To have in the former Soviet Mission an exhibition dedicated to the family of Czar Nicholas II, that is very paradoxical," Nebolsine says. The show, which is being overseen by Barbara Braathen, a New York gallery owner, and Charlotte Boline, a veteran United Nations hostess, and which, for security reasons, can be seen by invitation only, will mark what Janet Romanoff, who is the American wife of Prince Nikita Romanoff, a grandnephew of the czar, points out is "the first time we can bring our friends into the Mission." A spokesman for the Mission, Victor Romashov, describes the event as a manifestation of "the new wave of interest in the history of Russia before 1917," and explains, "We are now in a state of mind of rethinking, looking around, and reëstablishing the cultural past of a great country."

When Janet Romanoff was first shown the paintings, last spring, she sensed in the ostensibly cheerful scenes "a kind of sinister tone, so that you know what's going to happen." Osterweil concedes that his work has an elegiac sensibility, but says he never intended it to have any specific ideological resonance. His studio, a cluttered Bleecker Street loft, is stocked with hundreds of paintings of such cultural icons as George Balanchine, Gertrude Stein, and Louise Brooks, and also of Claude Monet, whose color palette informs much of Osterweil's own work, and with innumerable yellowing tabloid photographs of socialites and movie stars. Sitting at a kitchen table there, he says that his response to the royal family was largely visual, and was engendered by some photographs he came upon in the late seventies. He has been painting the family ever since. "Believe it or not, I'm not interested in the Romanoffs as people, although I've read a great deal about them," he explains. "They were possibly not the most interesting people. It was the era I liked—I felt a nostalgia for a time in which I didn't exist. They're just genre paintings of the everyday life of these people, who happen to be Romanoffs. I don't make a point of being either sycophantic or derogatory."

In a twenty-year career, Osterweil has had only one previous one-man show, and has supported himself by driving a taxi and by checking coats at the Café des Artistes, where he still works every other Tuesday and Saturday night. "Basically, people have not even wanted to look at my paintings," he says. "I can't blame them, because they're not what people are used to looking at. I've always felt that I'm a real fin-de-siècle type of guy. And now that it is the fin de siècle I feel that my time has come."

Actually, the Romanoff show represents the second wave of celebrity for Osterweil: he is the subject of a feature documentary film called "Painting the Town," which was made by two former neighbors of his, Andrew Behar and Sara Sackner, and received affectionate reviews when it was released for limited runs in New York and Los Angeles last spring. It will be re-released nationally, starting in November. The movie is devoted largely to a doggedly and inventively pursued hobby of Osterweil's, which is crashing celebrity parties and funerals. Perhaps because of the high security at the Mission show, he is at pains to point out that the film itself represents "a past time for me, really, which has sort of gone by." He does hope that his new stardom will last long enough for him to be written about in the *Star* and the *National Enquirer*, and says, "Tell them I'll believe anything they want to print about me: Secret Torment, Mystery Illness . . . "

Osterweil has been "sort of kept away" from the negotiations to mount his show, but he feels that his presence at the opening event will be singularly appropriate, for several reasons. "First of all, the paintings are about the Romanoffs and the aristocracy. My life as a taxi-driver and as a crasher shows that I'm truly a member of the proletariat as well. And my upbringing was middle-class. So I combine all three." ◆

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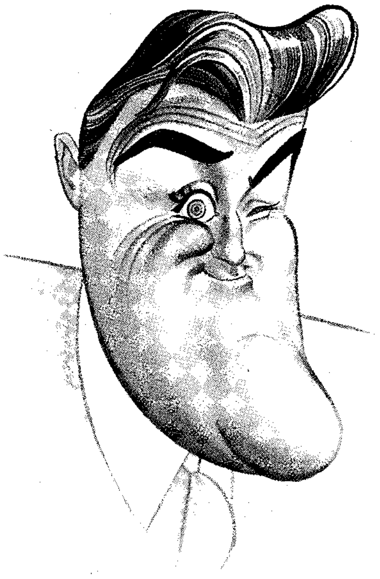
LETTER FROM BURBANK

JAY LENO'S HARD BARGAIN

by Peter J. Boyer

FOR nearly twenty years, Jay Leno had been a puzzle to those who view comedy in the Freudian context, as rage dressed in a smile. His act was clean, his work ethic was puritan, his offstage life was without spectacle, and, in defiance of the nasty-comic cliché, he himself was famously nice. Leno willingly signed autographs and chatted with strangers in airports—an opportunity that presented itself often in a road schedule of some two hundred dates a year. His peers called him "the hardest-working comedian in show business," which wasn't the same as the "funniest comedian in show business," but when he was chosen to succeed Johnny Carson as the host of the "Tonight Show," last spring, after a six-year apprenticeship, even those who thought Leno didn't merit the job on sheer talent believed that, somehow, he deserved it.



Leno: Can he survive without his great protector?

JOHN KASCHT

On the night of Sunday, September 20th, four months after he ascended to the most celebrated post in late-night television, Leno was visited at home by two NBC executives. They told him that the network had decided to fire the executive producer of the "Tonight Show," Helen Gorman Kushnick, who was his longtime friend and manager and who had, at his insistence, accompanied him to the show. They presented him with a choice: he could leave with her or he could keep his job, without her. Leno balked. Kushnick had been his manager for seventeen years, guiding his career with bird-dog concentration toward the prize that they had finally won. He felt that the victory was as much hers as his. What he considered loyalty, however, the NBC executives suggested was in fact "an addiction." Borrowing the language used to prod drug and alcohol addicts into treatment, Warren Littlefield, the president of NBC Entertainment, told Leno, "This is an intervention." He cautioned Leno that he must free himself from Kushnick before she destroyed his career.

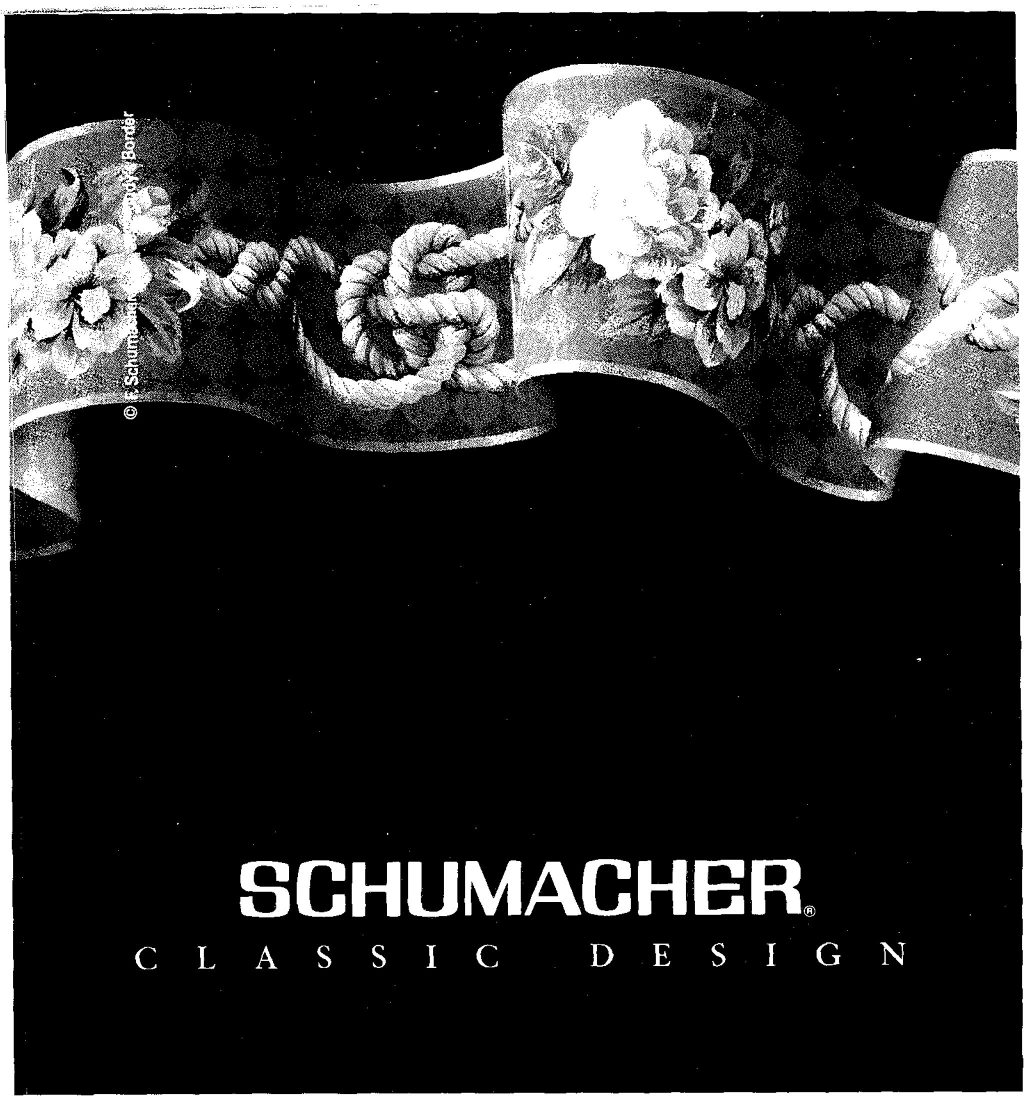
Even by Hollywood's standards, it was an unusual drama. In the space of four months, the genial Leno's "Tonight Show" had become the source of so many intrigues and power plays, and of such unease inside the network, and antipathy outside, that NBC executives were beginning to see it as the locus of the many anxieties plaguing them. Helen Kushnick was by no means the first producer of a television show to annoy network bosses, but then this fall has been a very edgy time at NBC. When the General Electric Company bought the network, six years ago, NBC was at its crest—not only hugely profitable but admired by TV critics and by Wall Street. Since then, its respected chairman, Grant Tinker, has left; its respected head programmer, Brandon Tartikoff, has left; and NBC has plunged from first in the ratings to last. Rumors that G.E. means to unload NBC are so persistent as to have acquired in industry chatter the tenor of a fait accompli—the only remaining question being who the buyer will be. Barry Diller, the former chairman of Twentieth Century Fox; Martin S. Davis, the president of Paramount Communications; and, most recently, Bill Cosby have been mentioned as suitors.

UNDER Johnny Carson, the "Tonight Show" was a safe, reliably profitable corner of the day for the network.

When he departed, a risk had to be taken on "Tonight" for the first time in thirty years. Although NBC went to great expense and effort to make the Carson-to-Leno transition seem like a seamless evolution, it was accompanied by much uncertainty. At issue was not only the new host's force of personality but also his ability to preserve "Tonight" 's hegemony on the celebrity circuit. For the men who ran the network, a seemingly trivial disagreement over booking guests was about to become a matter of dire consequence.

Carson had been the undisputed leader of the late-night pack; a call from "Tonight" virtually assured that a guest would decline other offers. But with Carson gone the competition—particularly from "The Arsenio Hall Show"—intensified. Kushnick decided to clarify "Tonight" 's position: she imposed a rigid policy of exclusivity, which in essence demanded that Leno's guests forgo any other offers—including future ones. If they chose to appear on a competitor's show, they would not be welcome on "Tonight." It was a rule viewed by many in Hollywood as an instrument of vendetta. Although there had been booking pressures exerted by Carson's staff over the years, these had stayed out of the papers. Kushnick's behind-the-scenes capers were quickly becoming an embarrassment. The subtext of the ensuing conflict, made increasingly plain to NBC executives in their meetings and conversations with agents and managers, was that the animosity generated by Kushnick's embargo would inevitably spill over into other areas of NBC interest, such as an effort to lure new artists to its prime-time-program schedule.

That a booking controversy would become such a high priority for NBC's top management reflects the immensity of the stakes. The "Tonight Show" is the centerpiece of NBC's late-night franchise, a block of programs that includes "Tonight," "Late Night with David Letterman," and "Later with Bob Costas." The late-night broadcast marketplace as a whole—including other network shows, such as ABC's "Nightline," and nationally syndicated programs, such as "The Arsenio Hall Show"—is expected by industry analysts to generate about six hundred million dollars in advertising revenues this year. NBC's share will be disproportionately



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high—about two hundred and seventy million dollars—because its late-night programs attract the biggest audience. That money stream is even more cherished in a year such as this, when analysts expect the network to show a loss of about twenty-five million dollars. That is why, when Littlefield and John J. Agoglia, the executive in charge of NBC Productions, were trying to solve the "Tonight Show" problems, they were inclined to use urgent language; on one occasion, Littlefield likened the show to the Titanic veering toward an iceberg. In Kushnick, Littlefield and Agoglia saw an intense, combative woman who had never quite revved down from the long campaign to win the "Tonight Show" and was now directing her considerable energies toward destabilizing an already tenuous situation. They were willing to pay Kushnick the more than half a million dollars remaining of her nearly one-million-dollar salary if she would leave, but no one thought it would be that easy.

The connection between Leno and Kushnick was based on more than friendship: Kushnick looked after Jay Leno. He was everybody's picture of a nice guy; she, on the other hand, has said of herself, "I've never been anybody's favorite person." On his climb to the top, Leno, a quietly ambitious man, avoided the feuds and jealousies and internal politics of his trade, and was able to do so largely because Kushnick was an eager combatant. "Jay and I have been together a long time, and he doesn't do this part of it—he doesn't do the ins and outs," Kushnick has said. "He's a very simple person. He's a nice guy. He doesn't think ill of anyone. He doesn't have that kind of mind, to put things together and say, 'Oh, this one's doing this and that one's doing that.' I, on the other hand, have been in the business for twenty-five years. I totally understand the stuff that goes on."

After Leno was awarded the "Tonight Show," he explained his philosophy regarding his career: "You go to work, you do the job—write joke, tell joke, get check—and the world will pretty much take care of itself." Actually, Kushnick took care of the world, and if the price was a pronounced dependence upon her, Leno was willing to pay it. She provided him with near-total insulation from the noisy bother of commerce,

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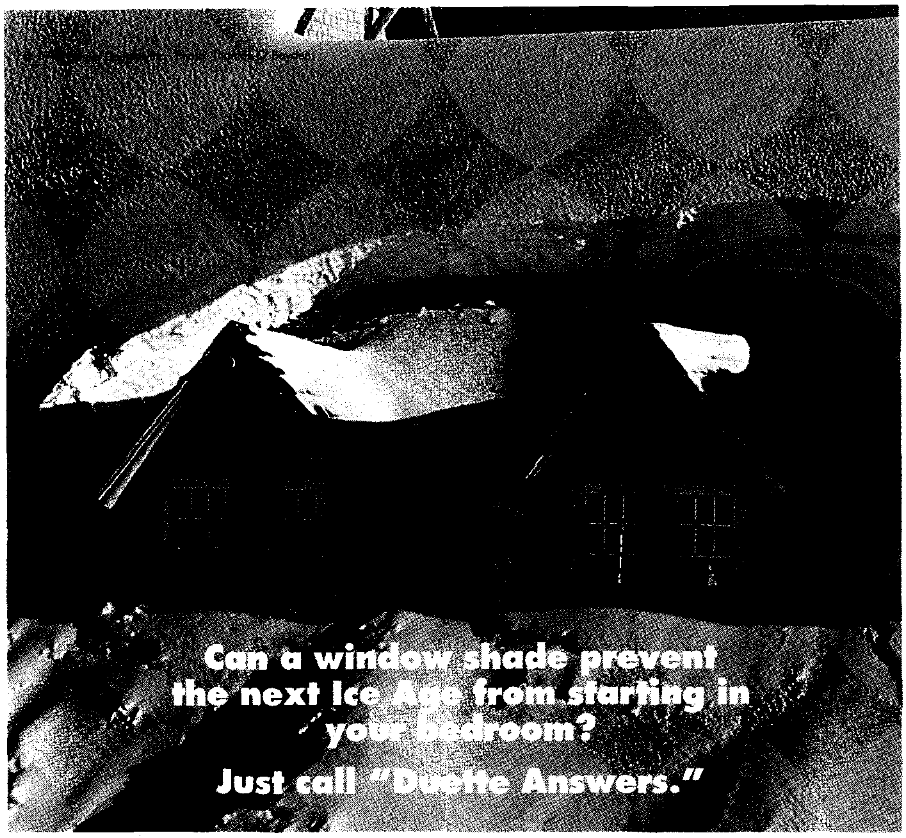
channelling his mail, arranging his travel plans, handing him his travel money. Kushnick's lawyer was Leno's lawyer, her publicist was his publicist. If Kushnick was tough, as Leno sometimes heard club managers on the road say, that just meant he didn't have to be.

It was a rare show-business relationship of trust—they were bound by no contracts—and of loyalty. Kushnick worked every angle to make sure that Leno was always seen at his best. When Tartikoff needed him to serve as co-host of the Emmy show a few years ago, Kushnick knew that Leno, who is slightly dyslexic, would have difficulty reading his lines on a teleprompter, and so she insisted that Leno's script, instead of being rolled on the prompter, be "flashed"—a full page displayed at a time—to make it easier for him to read. She also demanded that Leno have two of his own writers for the show, so that he would be familiar and comfortable with the material. Once Leno and Kushnick were installed on "Tonight," he left production matters entirely in her hands, and people who worked with them say that on those occasions when he intruded on her turf she would dismiss him, saying, "Go write your monologue, Jay. I'll handle this." "It's a very strange relationship," she said recently. "A lot of my relationship with Jay is the things that are unsaid. I just do it."

The full extent of the insulation Kushnick built around Leno may be seen in the fact that he seemed only vaguely aware that controversies had been raging around "Tonight" for the past four months, and was genuinely perplexed when he realized how serious the situation had become. "I've been serving you steak dinners for the last eighteen years," Kushnick explained to him then. "I just haven't bothered showing you how I slaughtered the cow."

On Thursday, September 17th, Littlefield and Agoglia telephoned Robert C. Wright, the president and chief executive officer of NBC, who was vacationing on Nantucket. They told him of their decision to fire Kushnick, and he asked what Leno's response would be. Littlefield said the betting was even odds among the Burbank brass that Leno would walk out, and added, "My feeling is that Jay Leno will have incredible separation anxiety, but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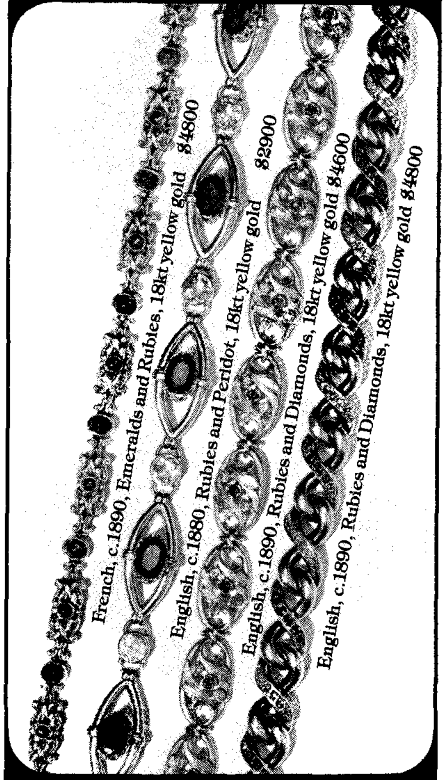

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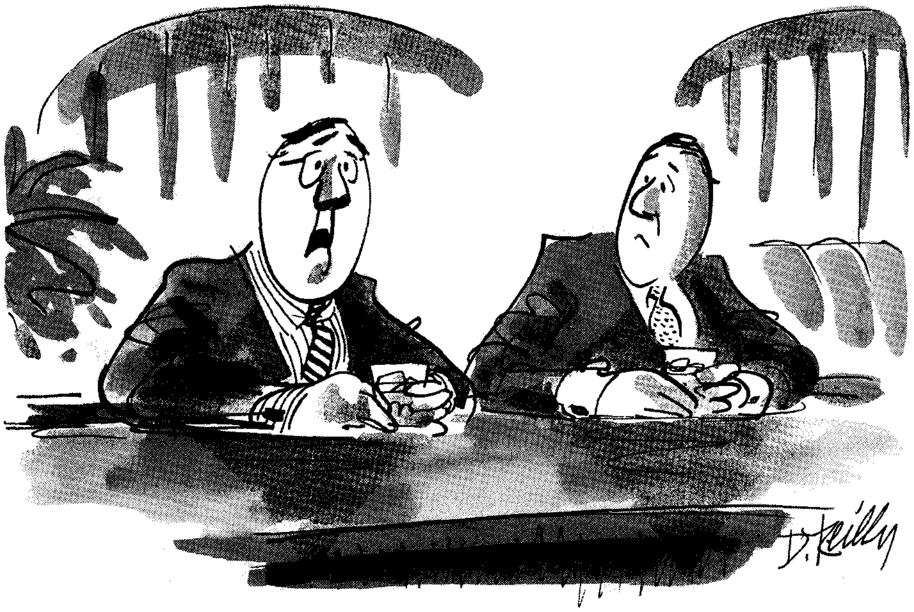

"I just read that Superman died—and he's the same age I am."

• •

he will probably stay with the show." Wright endorsed their decision.

Kushnick probably did not aid her cause when, the next morning, she was interviewed at length on Howard Stern's nationally syndicated radio program. Her theory about the "Tonight" wars was that she had been "set up" by an alliance of powerful but insecure men. "I mean, that's really what this is about," Kushnick told Stern. "These guys have been operating for years, and they hate that a woman is in charge."

Meanwhile, Littlefield and Agoglia had decided not to pull the trigger right away. On Friday afternoon, Agoglia sent Kushnick a letter outlining several conditions of employment for the executive producer of the "Tonight Show." Kushnick was forbidden to talk to the media without an NBC representative present, and she was forbidden to book guests and then cancel them, as she had done recently. The network may have been hoping that Kushnick would immediately break one of these rules, thereby allowing NBC to fire her "with cause." (NBC would also save itself the remaining salary that it would owe her if she was fired outright.) Surprisingly, on Friday evening, Kushnick agreed to the restrictions. At the same time, rumors and what seemed to be veiled threats of a pending sex-discrimination lawsuit against NBC began to filter out of her office.

Littlefield met twice with Leno on Friday. The first time, he called Leno into his office and told him that Kushnick was out of control and something had to be done. "The show's doing O.K., right?" Leno asked. Littlefield said the show was "doing well—not spectacular, but well," and then warned, "The town is going to rise up and choke you. They are rooting for you to fail, because of the hatred. It's not just competitive—it's their hatred for Helen Kushnick."

At the second meeting, Kushnick was there, too. Again Littlefield issued his warning, and Leno observed, "You know, when they put John Sununu out of the White House it fell apart." Kushnick defended herself, but, according to people at NBC, she soon lost her temper and stormed out of Littlefield's office shouting expletives—though not before using the moment to point out heatedly to Littlefield that his own job was in danger and to name the various candidates vying to replace him. ("So, I shouldn't be a diplomat," Kushnick says of that exchange.) In a way, the disruption served Littlefield's purpose. He turned to Leno and, sounding the theme of the Kushnick ouster, said, "If you love her, get her out of here. She can't withstand it. She's gone. She needs help."

Leno spent much of that weekend on the phone, with Kushnick; with their lawyer, Ronald Berg; and with a number

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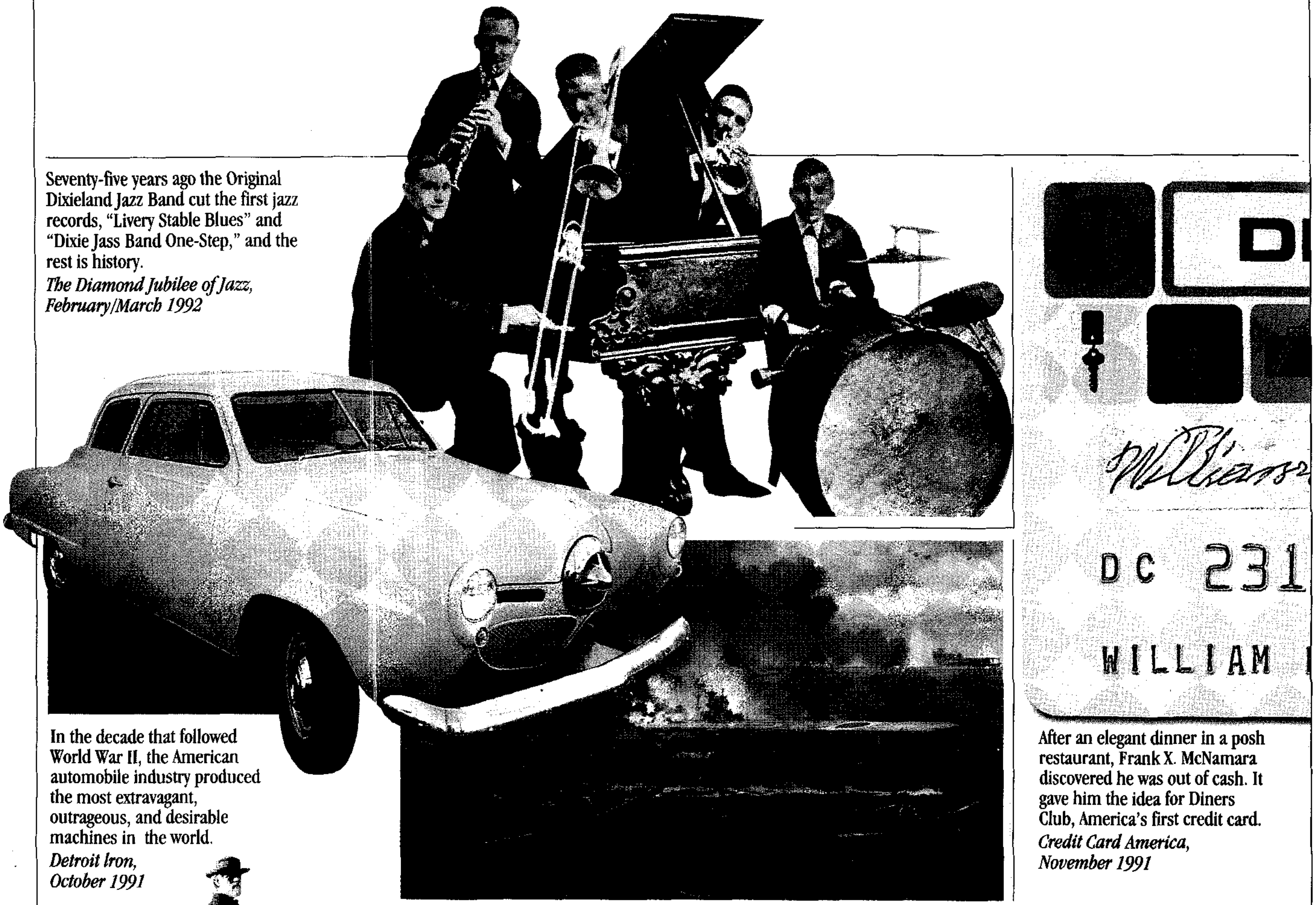

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of people who, reiterating what Littlefield had said, tried to convince him that "Helen needs help." At one point, Leno asked Littlefield what would happen if he walked out with her, and Littlefield took a gamble: he said he hoped that Leno would stay, but that if he left, NBC would replace him with David Letterman.

At ten o'clock on Monday morning, Kushnick and Berg arrived at Agoglia's office. Agoglia handed Kushnick a letter of dismissal, and she handed it to Berg, saying, "Jay will not approve this." She went to the studio, and later Leno appeared in Agoglia's office with the letter. He said that he did not support NBC's decision, and left. The rest of the day was strangely routine. Kushnick produced the show, as usual. Afterward, she was handed a letter ordering her off the NBC lot. Agoglia and Littlefield had considered having her escorted away, but the image of uniformed guards hustling a producer from the grounds suggested bad public relations, so they decided to do nothing until she left on her own volition. When she did, the locks on her office doors were changed, and copies of a picture of her were distributed to the NBC guardhouses, like little "Wanted" posters. She did not return.

On Monday night, Leno issued a statement to the press saying, "I feel NBC's actions are unwarranted in light of the success of the show to date, and I continue to support Mrs. Kushnick." But what spoke more loudly was the fact that he came in to work on Tuesday. He attended the noon staff meeting—something he'd rarely done before—and gave a little speech. As two of those in attendance recall it, he told the staff that Kushnick had great ideas and deserved credit for launching the show, but that he'd recently learned how bad things had got, "and I'm sorry for that." He said he wanted the show to be a fun place to work, and promised that, from then on, it would be.

UNLIKE Johnny Carson, who employed a comic to warm up the audience before each "Tonight" taping, Leno performs the nightly ritual himself. Wearing his off-camera uniform of jeans, sneakers, and denim shirt, he mixes it up with the audience in a relaxed performance that some people believe often surpasses his on-camera

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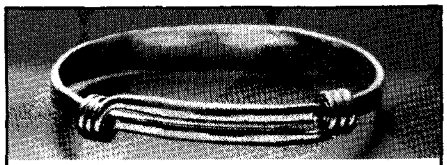

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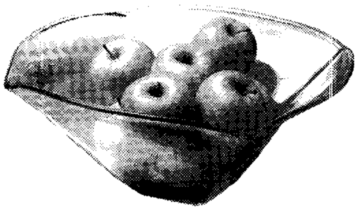

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monologues. As Leno was in mid-ritual one night, a week or so after Kushnick's dismissal, someone in the audience asked, "What's your best moment since taking over the show?" Leno stopped cold, as if the good moments had been purged from his memory. "What is the best moment?" he said, puzzling. "The best moment . . . best moment . . . Hmm. I'll have to think about that. Anybody else?"

"Yeah, what's your worst moment?"

"Oh, that's easy. Right now!"

The line got a good laugh, and it rang true. Over the past decade, Leno had seen Kushnick, his protector, endure a series of personal tragedies, and he had vowed to look out for her. In 1983, her three-year-old son, Samuel, died of AIDS. In 1987, she was found to have breast cancer. Two years later, her husband, Jerry, who had been Leno's co-manager, died of cancer. On his deathbed, Jerry Kushnick had made Leno promise that he would always be there for Helen. In 1990, her cancer recurred, and she underwent a mastectomy; she was still in chemotherapy when she negotiated Leno's move to the "Tonight Show." Through it all, Leno told her that he would put his career on hold if necessary, and he has tried to fill in as a surrogate father to Samuel's twin sister, Sara, now twelve, who calls him Uncle Jay.

But Kushnick is right: doing battle is not in Leno's nature. When he was growing up, in Andover, Massachusetts, his father, Angelo, taught him how to make people laugh—a useful trick in his trade, which was selling insurance. Yet Leno felt he was more like his mother, and even then he didn't understand the games that boys play; he shunned football, because he didn't want to knock people down. During his many years on the road, he travelled with his wife, Mavis, a writer and amateur astrologer he met in 1976 at the Comedy Store on the Sunset Strip. He often runs his material by Mavis; he does not want to offend.

Helen Gorman, the daughter of an Irish truck driver and an Italian-immigrant housewife who settled in East Harlem, was born to rumble. Bobby Colomby, a senior vice-president at Sony Music, who has known her for many years, says, "I call her a warrior, because she will just obsess on some-

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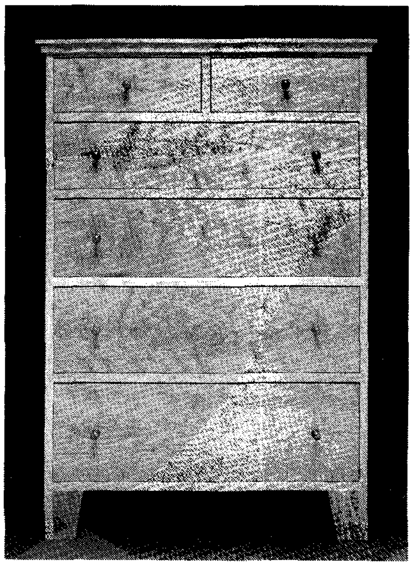

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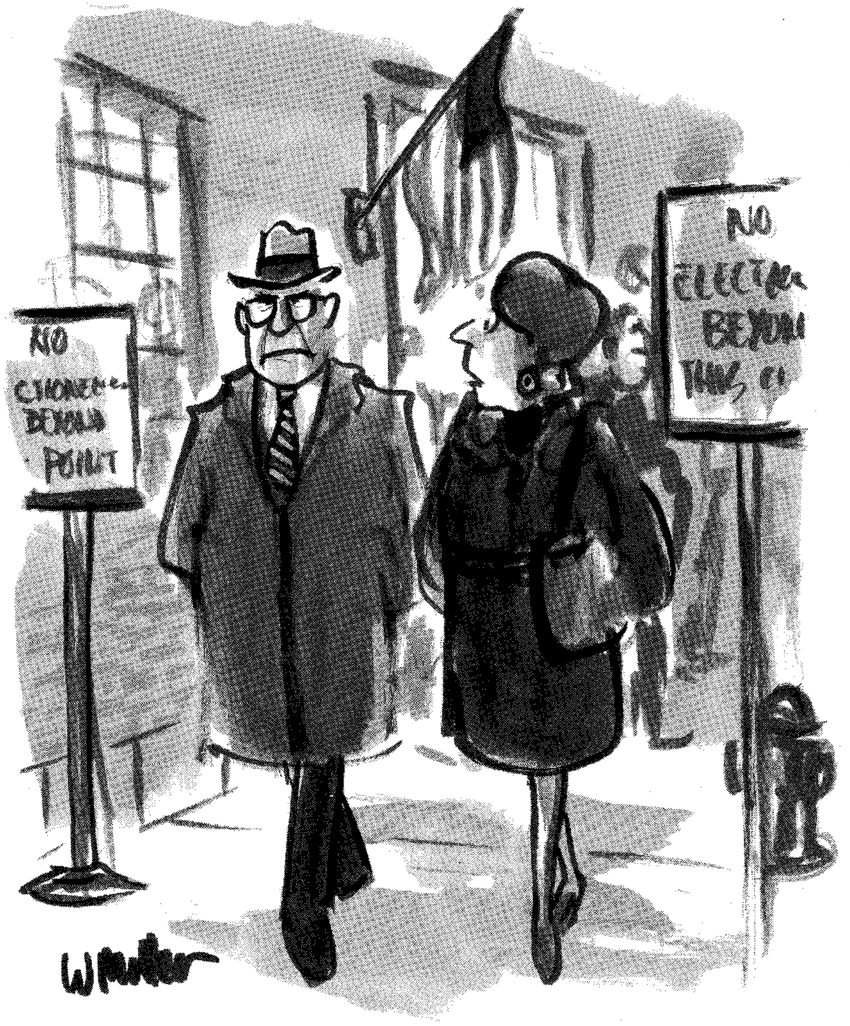
thing and just push and push and push." In 1988, after one particularly arduous negotiating session with Harris Katleman, then the president of Twentieth Century Fox Television, over a client's TV series, Katleman refused to deal further with her, and summoned an intermediary to sew up the deal. An acquaintance of Kushnick's says that she is the kind of person who will spend a vacation in Hawaii arguing with other vacationers over whose beach chair will go where. "I don't have a problem with not being liked," Kushnick says. "Jay and I have a great relationship; my daughter likes me. You can't please the whole world."

In 1973, when she was working in Los Angeles as an agent at International Creative Management, she met her future husband, then a New York lawyer whose clients included entertainment figures. Jerrold Kushnick, who was married at the time and had two teenage daughters, obtained a divorce and moved to Los Angeles; he and Helen were married in 1979. In the early 1970's he had created a management company, and his business partner, the comedian Jimmie Walker, had been an effective recruiter, bringing in, among others, David Letterman, Elayne Boosler, and Debbie Allen. Walker's recollection is that he introduced Jerry Kushnick to a friend of his from Boston, Jay Leno. (Helen says that she spotted Leno doing his act after he moved to Los Angeles, and that *she* introduced Jerry to Leno.) As the business started to take off, Jerry Kushnick decided to reorganize it with Helen, and in the process Walker was edged out. He remains critical of Helen, believing that she undermined his relationship with Leno. "That was a very illegitimate deal that Helen pulled off," he says now. Kushnick responds that her husband was in charge of the matter, "and I can't ask him about it."

A year after their wedding, when she was thirty-five, Helen gave birth to



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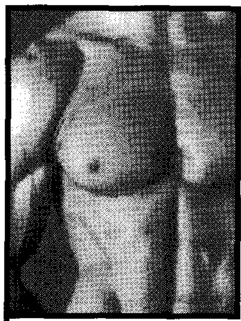

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twins. Sara and Samuel were born two months early, at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, and spent several weeks in the neonatology unit, where they both received a series of blood transfusions. Samuel, who was in and out of intensive care with respiratory problems, was transfused twenty times. After the infants were brought home, Helen noticed that although they were relatively healthy, Samuel was not growing as fast as Sara. Then, soon after his second birthday, Sam caught a cold, which, over the following months, led to more serious infections. Despite the Kushnicks' concern over Sam's fevers and perpetually runny nose, the doctors they consulted frequently characterized their son's problems as the common maladies of childhood. In September of 1983, Sam was admitted to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. He was coughing and feverish, and his lips had taken on a blue tinge. The next day, the hospital reluctantly gave the Kushnicks its diagnosis: Sam was suffering from a kind of pneumonia common in patients with AIDS.

Samuel Kushnick died nineteen days after entering Cedars, and the Kushnicks began a crusade to find out what had happened. They learned that the community blood bank at Cedars, the twenty-second largest in the country, had been contaminated by the AIDS virus in the early nineteen-eighties, and they pressed the hospital to get in touch with the parents of other children who had received transfusions in that period. The Kushnicks felt that Cedars and the American Red Cross, which administered the blood bank, were stonewalling them. Partly in response to the Kushnick case, which received national attention, the hospital instituted a program for alerting other parents. Helen Kushnick later helped to draft national guidelines for the treatment of pediatric AIDS and was a founding director of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, or AMFAR.

The Kushnicks' battle with Cedars lasted for four years and, in a way, it informed Helen's conflicts with NBC when, nine years after her son's death, she and Leno landed the "Tonight Show." "This is very similar to me," she says. "I mean, this is about the system, and the system not being right, and that's what the Red Cross was. In 1983, when I said, 'I'm going public with this,' I was told, 'Oh, they'll get you,' and 'They're real powerful, Cedars-Sinai and the American Red Cross.' And I said, ' "Get" me—what?' So this situation that I'm in right now is really no different to me. I don't know why I'm always the person fighting the system. I guess that's just my role in life."

ONE of the first jokes Helen Kushnick heard Jay Leno tell onstage broke her up. It was 1975. He was performing at the Comedy Store, and he told the crowd that he had just arrived from Boston and couldn't get used to the West Coast: "The beach is on the wrong side."

Helen became Leno's agent shortly thereafter, and arranged for Jerry Kushnick to become Jay's manager, so that they could represent him together. Apparently, that wasn't much of a struggle. Jimmie Walker remembers that Jerry had reservations about taking on the young Boston comic with the remarkable jaw, saying, "He doesn't earn enough to cover expenses," but Helen saw something she liked. "His material was so different from what everybody else was doing, which was very raunchy, and all the four-letter words," she says. "He was saying things that people were thinking, and making it come out funny. And I thought, Isn't this nice? A thinking comedian."

She came to hold high aspirations for Leno and to dream of his becoming the comic of his generation, but first he had to get work. Leno's Comedy Store appearance was an unpaid gig. He had been sleeping in his car, and once spent a night in jail after being picked up for vagrancy. There wasn't yet a comedy club in every strip mall—young comedians had to hope for a break on one of the TV talk shows. But Jay Leno wasn't an easy television sell. Casting directors didn't think much of his acting skills or his looks. One of them, according to the Leno legend, even recommended plastic surgery on the now famous Leno chin, saying, "He has a face that will scare small children." Undeterred, Kushnick sent Leno out on the road, and he worked as the opening act in dinner theatres, doing standup while the tables were cleared. He wasn't making much money, and when he was short on the down payment for his first house the Kushnicks lent him ten thousand dol-

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lars. Over the years, many of the Kushnicks' clients switched management, but Leno never strayed.

It has become another part of the Leno legend that when Johnny Carson first saw him perform he told the young comic that he didn't have enough jokes. In the early seventies, every young comic's dream was to land a guest spot on the "Tonight Show." Carson finally invited Leno to appear on "Tonight" in 1977, but his real television home had yet to be created. It arrived, in 1982, in the form of "Late Night with David Letterman," which became to a younger, hipper audience what Carson's show was to grownups. Letterman gave his pal Leno a standing invitation to be a guest, and Leno made the most of it. By then, Leno had become established in comedy's first rank. In 1986, the Kushnicks asked Brandon Tartikoff, then the president of NBC Entertainment, to bring Leno to the network. In June, Tartikoff, although he wasn't sure exactly what Leno would be doing, signed him.

A few weeks earlier, Joan Rivers, who had been Carson's exclusive guest host, had left NBC to try her hand at her own show. Tartikoff and Carson subsequently chose Leno and Garry Shandling as "Tonight" guest hosts, with the two comics alternating on Mondays—Carson's day off—and during his vacations. But after a while Shandling became preoccupied with his cable show and dropped out. Leno geared up. Tartikoff says, "With Helen and Jerry behind him, he was honing and polishing, and taking material out on the road, so when he came in and did a monologue once a week or every two weeks it was killer stuff."

By the time Leno was named Carson's exclusive guest host, in 1987, it was apparent that there were just two contenders for Carson's job: Leno and Letterman. Letterman was the distinct favorite, having had his own nightly show on NBC for five years, but Leno, the underdog, tried harder. Kushnick, knowing that Leno needed to learn how to work with writers, hired a team of gagmen to work with him. When he was on the road—and that was almost always when he was not on "Tonight"—she arranged for him to meet with local entertainment reporters and visit the local TV stations affiliated with NBC. When the network needed a performer

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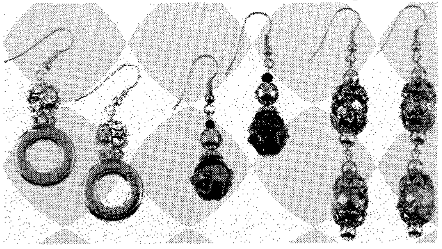

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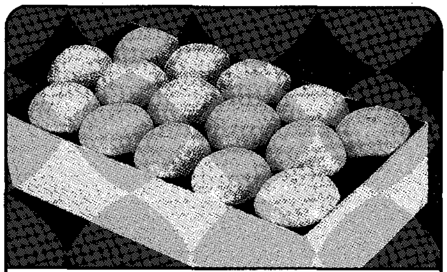

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for a function, Leno always raised his hand. This was a campaign, and little things might make the difference.

Meanwhile, Carson was hanging on, and that was fine with Tartikoff. The NBC programmer had always appreciated the fact that as long as Carson was at NBC the eleven-thirty time slot was something he didn't have to worry about. If the king's ratings were dropping a bit, if his audience was getting older, Tartikoff could live with that as long as Carson could—it was Carson's call. However, Tartikoff remembers, by 1990 "Helen began to say, 'So, what's next? When's the king going to die?' " Someone in the Leno-Kushnick camp decided to help things along, and planted a story in the New York *Post* suggesting that NBC meant to dump Carson in favor of Leno. It didn't hasten Carson's departure, but it did make him mad. Ever since, relations between Carson and Leno (neither of whom mentioned the other on the air during the transition) have remained cool.

In February of 1991, Carson told Tartikoff that he would retire from "Tonight" sometime in the next year. By then, Tartikoff was halfway out the door to his new job, as chairman of Paramount Pictures (a post from which he resigned last week). The task of choosing Carson's successor fell to Warren Littlefield.

While Leno was actively campaigning for the job, Letterman and his manager, Jack Rollins, never approached NBC about "Tonight." Although Letterman had created a successful franchise, Leno had the strong support of the affiliated stations he had been wooing for five years. Moreover, while Letterman's idiosyncratic humor was well suited to the post-midnight time period, he was unproved at eleven-thirty, and Leno was a known quantity there. The choice of Leno would also make the programming pieces fit neatly. If Letterman got the job, Kushnick warned, Leno would leave for CBS, but if Leno got the job NBC could keep Letterman, whose contract had another year to run. In the end, Littlefield and John Agoglia decided not even to discuss the job with Letterman, reasoning that if he said yes they'd have a problem. In June of 1991, the network announced Leno's appointment.

Bypassing Letterman proved a short-

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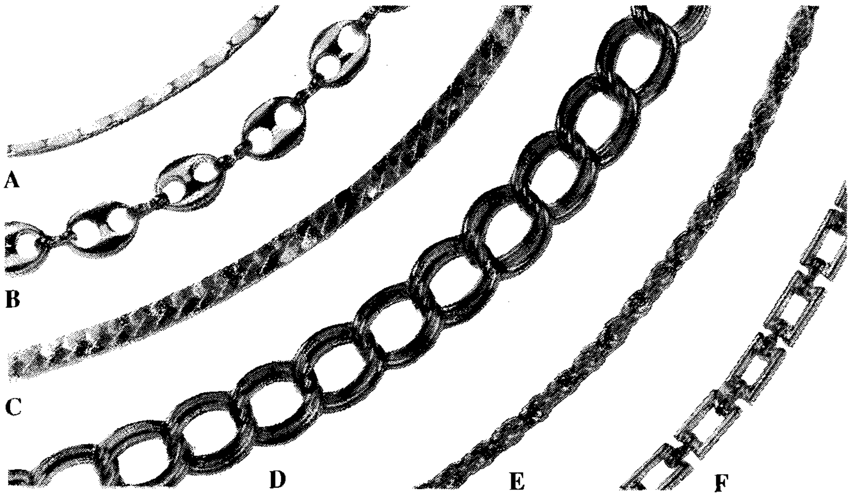

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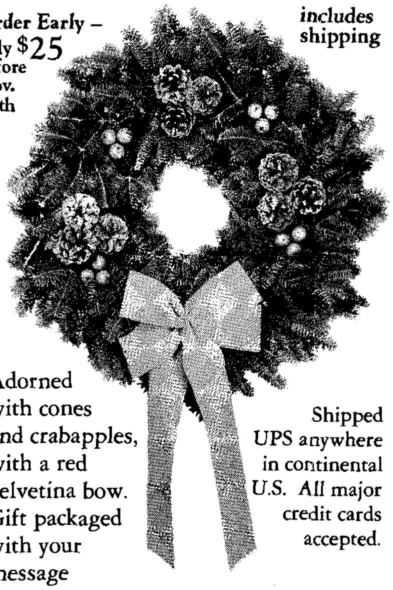

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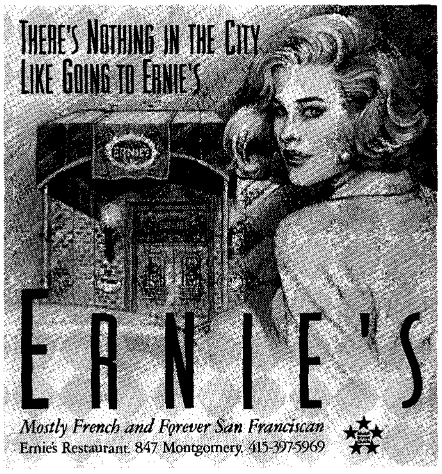

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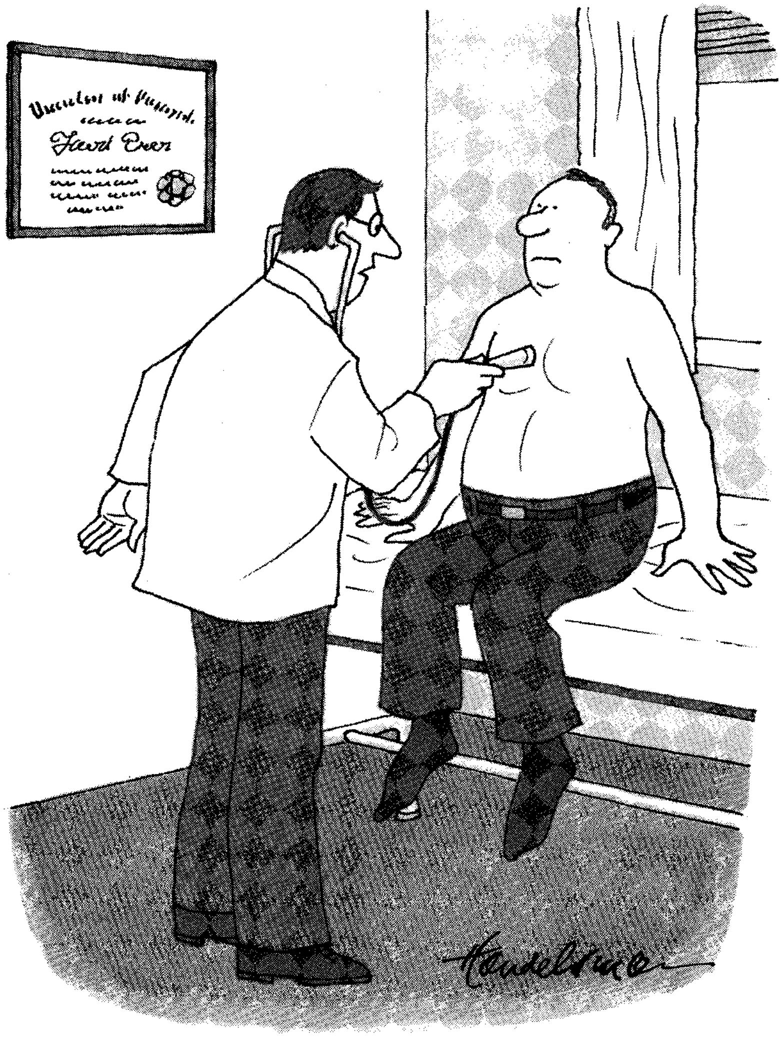
term solution, a miscalculation that NBC is now paying for, as Letterman entertains offers from NBC's competitors.

KUSHNICK and NBC got off to a bad start. True, the network had given her the job she'd asked for (and had bought out her management company for seven million dollars, even though her client list had dwindled to Leno and three writers). But she was annoyed that she had had to ask for the job. "If I were a man," she would say to people, "would I have *had* to ask?" Others later wondered whether the network would have so readily raised the question of psychological problems with a male employee. (Jane Rosenthal, the executive vice-president of Tribeca Productions, Robert De Niro's film company, and a longtime friend of Kushnick's, dismisses the talk of her instability. "If Helen had been going to crack, she would have cracked after Sam died. And then Jerry died, and she still hadn't cracked up. And then the breast cancer reappeared, she had a breast removed. The other stuff is just business, you know?") Then, there was the show's changing relationship to the network. For the last dozen years of his reign, Johnny Carson had owned the "Tonight" franchise—a concession that NBC had granted him in order to settle a contract dispute. Between eleven-thirty and twelve-thirty every week night, Carson and his staff had had complete autonomy, and near-complete control over the NBC airwaves. If some news or sports event caused the "Tonight Show" to start late, for example, it was entirely Carson's decision whether there would be a show at all. When Carson left, however, ownership of the franchise reverted to NBC, which was delighted to have it

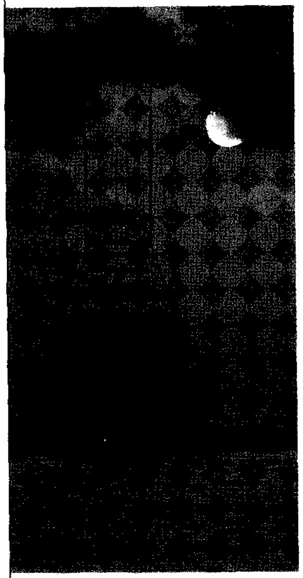


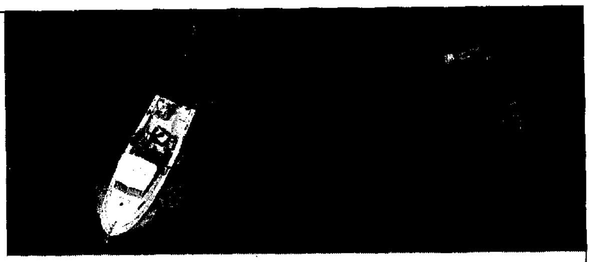
"You'll have to be X-rayed, Mr. Jensen. I seem to be picking up Rush Limbaugh."

back. NBC executives felt an eager sense of proprietorship. The trouble lay in the fact that Helen Kushnick did as well.

From the beginning, she was outspoken in her view of the way the network was run, which was that much of it was not run well. Her criticism was directed particularly at NBC's top management—Wright, Littlefield, and Agoglia—whom she considered to be amateurish, and sometimes she mused aloud about the frustration of having to explain the television business to them. She came to sense a particular antipathy toward her on the part of Robert Wright. After the first couple of weeks on the show, Kushnick received a note of congratulations from Wright's wife but nothing from Wright himself; Kushnick saw the gesture as a kind of sex discrimination, and said so. Finally, after Leno told Wright that it would be nice if he congratulated Kushnick himself, Wright sent her a personal note. (Kushnick later held it up as evidence that NBC had endorsed her stewardship of "Tonight.") But her disapproval reached downward, too, and eventually she offered her opinion about virtually every NBC department that had dealings with the "Tonight Show." "Her goal was to get Jay that job, and it appeared that once that was in place, and once everything was rolling along, she couldn't stop pushing," Bobby Colomby says. "It was like a momentum that was just ongoing, and once there were no more walls to knock down she began to create imaginary walls."

Kushnick's detractors in show business pointed to her tenure at "Tonight" as a classic instance of the "power corrupts" principle, but to Kushnick her job was the same one it had always been: to advance the cause of Jay Leno. "I just put blinders on and was doing my job," she says. Responding to the possibility that NBC might suddenly have an unwelcome hole following the "Tonight Show" if David Letterman departed, Kushnick suggested to Warren Littlefield that "Tonight" could fill the first thirty minutes of Letterman's slot, expanding to ninety minutes—its original format. Littlefield thanked her for the suggestion, but she didn't leave it at that; instead, she telephoned Kevin Goldman, a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, and his subsequent story about her proposal





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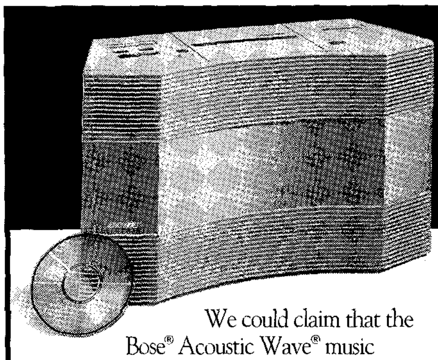

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further antagonized the already touchy Letterman camp.

A short while later, Kushnick informed Agoglia that she wanted to buy NBC Productions. She said that some investment bankers she knew were already interested. When Agoglia didn't warm to the idea, she stormed off.

IT has been forgotten in Hollywood, perhaps unfairly, that Kushnick didn't actually start the battle that caused her to lose the war. A month before Carson stepped down, Arsenio Hall assailed Leno in *Entertainment Weekly*, ridiculing his frequent efforts to portray their incipient late-night duel as friendly competition. "I always hear that Jay and I are friends when they interview him," Hall was quoted as saying. "I have no problem about saying good things about my competitors, but Jay Leno and I aren't friends! And you know what? *I* wasn't anointed, O.K.? No one put the late-night silver spoon in *my* mouth. I earned every drop of *mine*. . . . And I'm gonna treat him like we treated the kid on the high-school basketball team who was the coach's son. . . . We tried to *kick his ass*, and that's what I'm going to do—kick Jay's ass."

Some said that the statement stemmed from an unpleasant impulse on Hall's part, and was unnecessarily personal, but the competition for the late-night audience is a high-stakes enterprise, and in that regard Hall's comments showed tactical instinct. Against Johnny Carson, "The Arsenio Hall Show" was viewed as an interesting but certainly lesser late-night choice, but with Carson on his way out Hall's assault had the effect of elevating his show, suggesting a battle between equals.

When Kushnick arrived, she responded characteristically: the "Tonight" staff became more aggressive in its booking efforts, pressuring publicists and agents to offer their clients to Leno first. There was some grousing around town, but, so far, Kushnick and her team were guilty only of heightening the intensity of a well-established practice among competing talk shows.

Then came Kushnick's attempt to thwart an appearance by Elizabeth Taylor on "Arsenio." Kushnick was angered that Taylor would choose "Arsenio," especially considering that the purpose of the appearance was to promote Taylor's AIDS foundation. Kushnick telephoned Taylor at home, reminded the actress of her own involvement in the AIDS arena, and asked her to cancel the "Arsenio" booking and appear on "Tonight" instead. But Taylor wouldn't be moved. Kushnick then began to press Taylor about the propriety of her fund-raising, questioning whether the foundation was a wholly legitimate effort and properly registered. Taylor interpreted these questions as a threat, and her attorney wrote Kushnick a letter demanding that she halt such inquiries. Word soon spread that Kushnick was feuding with and threatening to investigate Liz Taylor; Kushnick denied it. However, the Cirque du Soleil was scratched from the "Tonight Show" some weeks later because, according to one "Tonight" staff member, the circus act had "appeared at Liz Taylor's benefit." Kushnick says that the only reason for the cancellation was that the Cirque du Soleil had already been on the show several times in the recent past.

In August, when the "Tonight Show" went back on the air after the Olympics, Kushnick made a decision that, in the view of many in Hollywood, crossed the line. Irked by the criticism of her booking approach, Kushnick responded by enunciating a booking rule that was still more aggressive. "Her policy was: Every record company, every movie company, every publicist is going to have to choose from now on—either they do us or they do 'Arsenio,'" a "Tonight" staff member recalls. The new Kushnick policy, apparently, demanded not only that guests appear solely on "Tonight" first but that they appear solely on "Tonight" forever.

The "Tonight" intrigues rated high in entertainment-industry buzz rooms over the summer, but in September the controversies became public when the country singer Travis Tritt, who had appeared on "Tonight," broke the Kushnick rule and accepted an invitation from "Arsenio." Kushnick called Ken Kragen, Tritt's manager, and suggested that if Tritt appeared on "Arsenio" he would be banned from the "Tonight Show." Tritt did "Arsenio," and Kragen was enraged when another of his performers, Trisha Yearwood, was cancelled from "Tonight," in what he saw as a retaliatory move. He expressed his anger in an article in the Los Angeles

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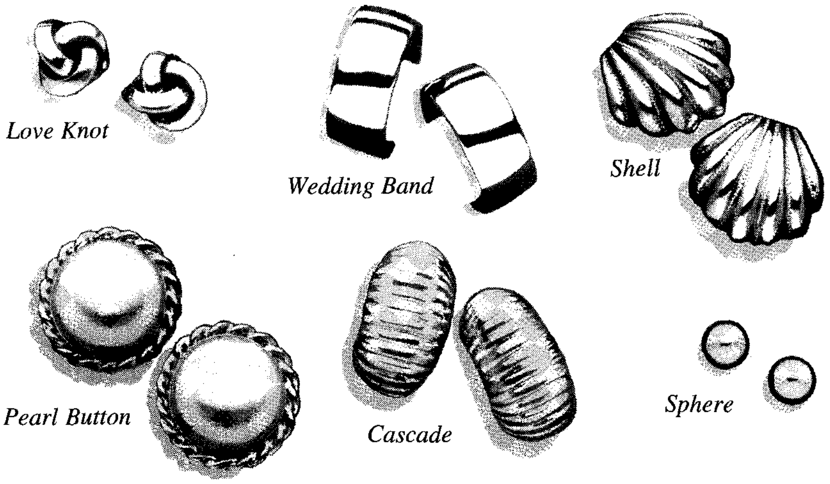

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Times, and suddenly the Kushnick problem took on an urgent status at NBC.

"This is a business that relies on personal relationships, and her behavior, of torching relationships, became intolerable," John Agoglia says. "Internally, we no longer had a team rooting for her, and it had moved way beyond the occasional call to Warren and me from very angry people on the outside. This is a personal sort of business, and we can't deal with that."

For her part, Kushnick began to suspect that the troubles plaguing the show were not accidental but, rather, the work of people with an interest in seeing Jay Leno fail. Ken Kragen, in her view, was merely a dupe, recruited by her enemies. (She later pointed out in an angry exchange with NBC executives that Kragen had a production deal at NBC.) The real culprits were Bernie Brillstein, the powerful producer and talent manager; Michael Ovitz, the head of Creative Artists Agency; Brandon Tartikoff, who was now at Paramount; and other members of the "little power group that runs this town," in Kushnick's phrase. The enemies list seemed to grow daily, and eventually it included her friend Bobby Colomby. Kushnick believed that she had made enemies because she played the power game as well as the members of "the Boys' Club," as she put it, and they resented her for it. She also came to believe that NBC had changed its mind about Leno.

Kushnick was not reserved about these views, and as they bounced around Hollywood's echo chamber they acquired the tenor of frantic rantings. Industry associates, many of them the very people she deemed suspect, would hear the latest Kushnick story, shake their heads, and say, "She needs help." But, Leno would tell Kushnick, "just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're *not* out to get you," and he had a point. Most of the people Kushnick worried about did, in fact, have much to gain if she—and, by extension, Leno—were to fail. Brillstein represented Garry Shandling as well as Dana Carvey, who was being talked of as a replacement for "Letterman" and possibly for Leno; Ovitz represented Leno's friendly rival David Letterman; Tartikoff's Paramount produced "Arsenio Hall." People in the business of promoting artists, such as Kragen and Colomby, would benefit if

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the "Tonight Show" eased away from its aggressive booking policies.

As the drama played itself out, David Letterman was poised offstage, like a gremlin prepared to make mischief. Letterman, it turned out, had been deeply aggrieved when NBC gave the "Tonight Show" to Leno without so much as discussing it with him, and people close to him say that he nursed his anger into a sustained rage. When Littlefield and Agoglia flew to New York last year to tell Letterman about their "Tonight" decision, he walked out of the meeting, according to one person who was present. He joked about his also-ran status on the air, and for a time he took to flashing Littlefield's photograph on the screen and offering barbed commentary. Much worse for NBC, he went out and hired Michael Ovitz.

While NBC was busy launching Leno's "Tonight Show," the Letterman issue didn't seem especially pressing, because he was bound to the network until April of 1993. But as fall came and NBC's new programs faltered in the ratings the prospect of losing Letterman assumed a chilling likelihood. Then Ovitz negotiated the right to talk to other suitors on Letterman's behalf before his contract expired, a provision that was agreed upon last Friday. He will shop Letterman around for the next four weeks.

It is definitely a seller's market. CBS, which has never had a successful eleven-thirty program, is desperate to hire Letterman, and has promised long-term security, as well as the most popular lineup of prime-time shows as a lead-in. Howard Stringer, the network's president, has ingratiated himself in Letterman's circle and has spent months preparing for the campaign to win him over. ABC is also keenly interested and can offer Letterman a midnight slot, with "Nightline," at eleven-thirty, as a lead-in. Several companies are also dangling syndication deals in front of him; one rumor had a syndicator offering him twenty-five million dollars to leave NBC. "They can all write checks," a member of the Letterman camp says. "The money is irrelevant." Apparently, what matters to Letterman is getting a shot at the broader audience of the eleven-thirty time period, which NBC can deliver only if Leno is

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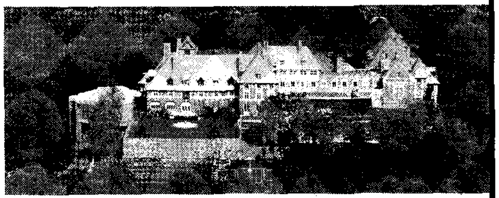

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fired. Letterman, meanwhile, has said that he doesn't want to be seen as the man who dumped Jay Leno.

NBC's hopes look dim, but it has one chance to keep Letterman. When Ovitz lays Letterman's offers on the table, the network has the right to match the best bid. Although it won't be able to offer an eleven-thirty time slot, it plans to promise Letterman the next best thing: that if Leno falters, Letterman will get the "Tonight Show."

In the weeks since Kushnick was fired, Leno has become more engaged in the daily process of the show: he's attending meetings, and, where once he was shielded by Kushnick, his door is now open to the staff. On the show, people around him say, he is more relaxed, and it's beginning to be evident. The "Tonight" ratings were fine in October, but November presents a minefield. It is a "sweeps" month, when ratings are used to set local stations' ad rates for the next quarter. The fact that Letterman will be out bargaining with NBC's competitors can only intensify the pressure on Leno. NBC has told him of its plan to offer Letterman first crack at "Tonight" if Leno falters, and Leno knows that if he has a terrible November this may happen sooner rather than later. For Leno, it must be a surprising and unwelcome turn in a career course that seemed finally to have led him safely to his destination. Last May, when he became only the fourth permanent host in the thirty-eight-year history of the "Tonight Show," Leno joked, in his opening monologue, about the longevity implicit in the job. Responding to the studio audience's applause, he quipped, "Let's see how you feel in thirty years." Now, NBC's expressions of confidence notwithstanding, he can't be certain of lasting thirty weeks.

Kushnick, meanwhile, seems to be accommodating herself to life away from the show. She says she does not need "help," and hasn't sought it, although she did need a vacation. As for Leno, Kushnick says, "Jay will survive." Then, perhaps reflecting on the future of Leno in the "Tonight" fray without her by his side, she adds, "I think that will be determined by how much this pressure gets to him. Running things, and interacting with people a lot on a daily basis, is not something he's used to." ♦

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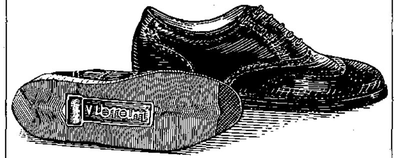

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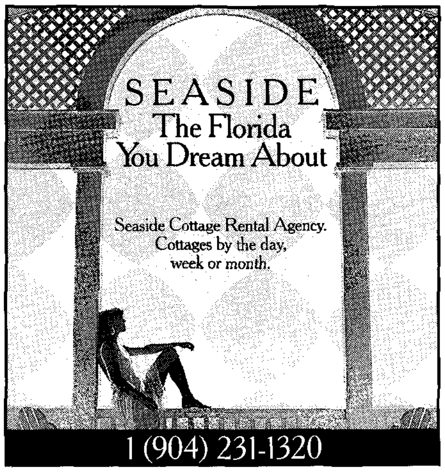

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POSTCARD FROM OREGON

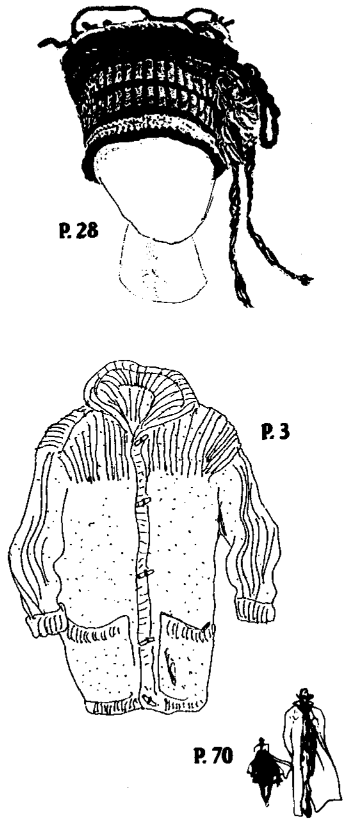
REVOLUTION NUMBER 9

by Robert Sullivan

WHEN the summer began, the city of Portland, Oregon, was adding Native American essays to the ground-breaking multicultural curriculum of its schools, debating improvements to its forty-eight-hundred-acre inner-city wilderness park (the nation's largest), and attaching Yakima bicycle racks to the front of its buses, which are part of its award-winning public-transportation system. The Oregon Citizens Alliance was then only a blip on the electoral horizon. In fact, when the summer began, the citizens of the leading city of one of the country's most liberal-minded states saw the O.C.A. as just a bunch of religious zealots and right-wing extremists pushing Ballot Measure 9, an amendment to the state constitution that would, in its own words, make homosexuality "abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse . . . to be discouraged and avoided"—and could make same-sex parenting illegal, prohibit gay teachers, and even cause homosexuals to lose state business licenses. The O.C.A. had shown some political clout, having marshalled thirteen per cent of the vote in the most recent gubernatorial election, in 1990, but so far it hadn't had nearly enough votes to pass an anti-abortion amendment it had proposed, and its gubernatorial candidate had served only to spoil the Republicans' chances and inadvertently help elect a Democratic governor. Oregon, home of the nation's first bottle bill, of health-insurance innovation, and of cutting-edge community-policing strategies, would never tolerate such a blatant piece of discrimination as Measure 9.

Or so the thinking went. But then the summer ended, and by the time the larch trees had begun turning yellow in the Cascades and the snow was falling again on the glaciers of Mt. Hood, the O.C.A. and its homophobic crusade had been pumped up on "Today" and Pat Robertson's show and featured in *Newsweek* and *U.S.A. Today.* In August, Lon Mabon, the O.C.A.'s leader, had gone to Washington, D.C., and been courted by the Republican senators Orrin Hatch and Phil Gramm (both of whom feared that Mabon might spoil the November campaign of Bob Packwood, their Oregon colleague); the visit transformed him from a fringe figure making calls to the *Oregonian* into a power broker taking calls from the New York *Times.* With Mabon's anti-gay rhetoric setting the tone, reports of bias crimes against homosexuals in Oregon more than doubled in the first three months of the year. Almost daily, gay men and women in Portland were being beaten by skinheads shouting "Faggot!" In the town of Hillsboro, a few miles west of Portland, a church sanctuary was spray-painted with pro-Measure 9 graffiti. At 3:18 A.M. on September 26th, in Salem, the state capital, Hattie Cohens, a black twenty-nine-year-old lesbian, and Brian Mock, a white forty-five-year-old gay man, were killed when a Molotov cocktail was thrown into their home.

Over the summer, "No on 9" rallies picked up in Portland, but Mabon's message of fear was igniting the rural parts of Oregon, and small prayer groups were gathering in the countryside by night to pray for a halt to the advance of "the militant homosexual agenda." All of a sudden, the people of Portland—there are one and a quarter million of them, nearly half the population of the state—realized not only that Measure 9 might actually pass but that even if it didn't their city's and state's image might be permanently changed. One September morning, they went to their health clubs and gourmet coffee shops to read a story on the New York *Times* Op-Ed page that went as far as to say that "ethnic cleansing" had "transformed a once tolerant, progressive state into a repressive, frightful place." By the time summer ended, Oregon had been turned into a vicious anti-gay battleground, and the people of Portland



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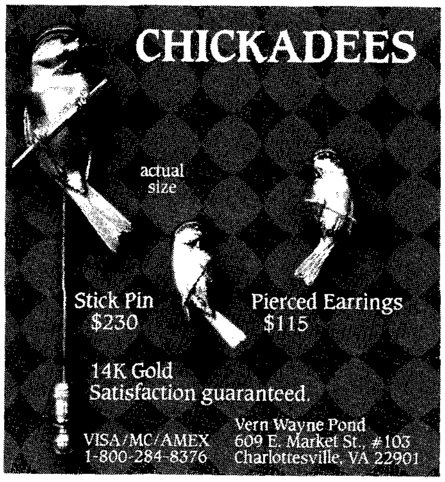
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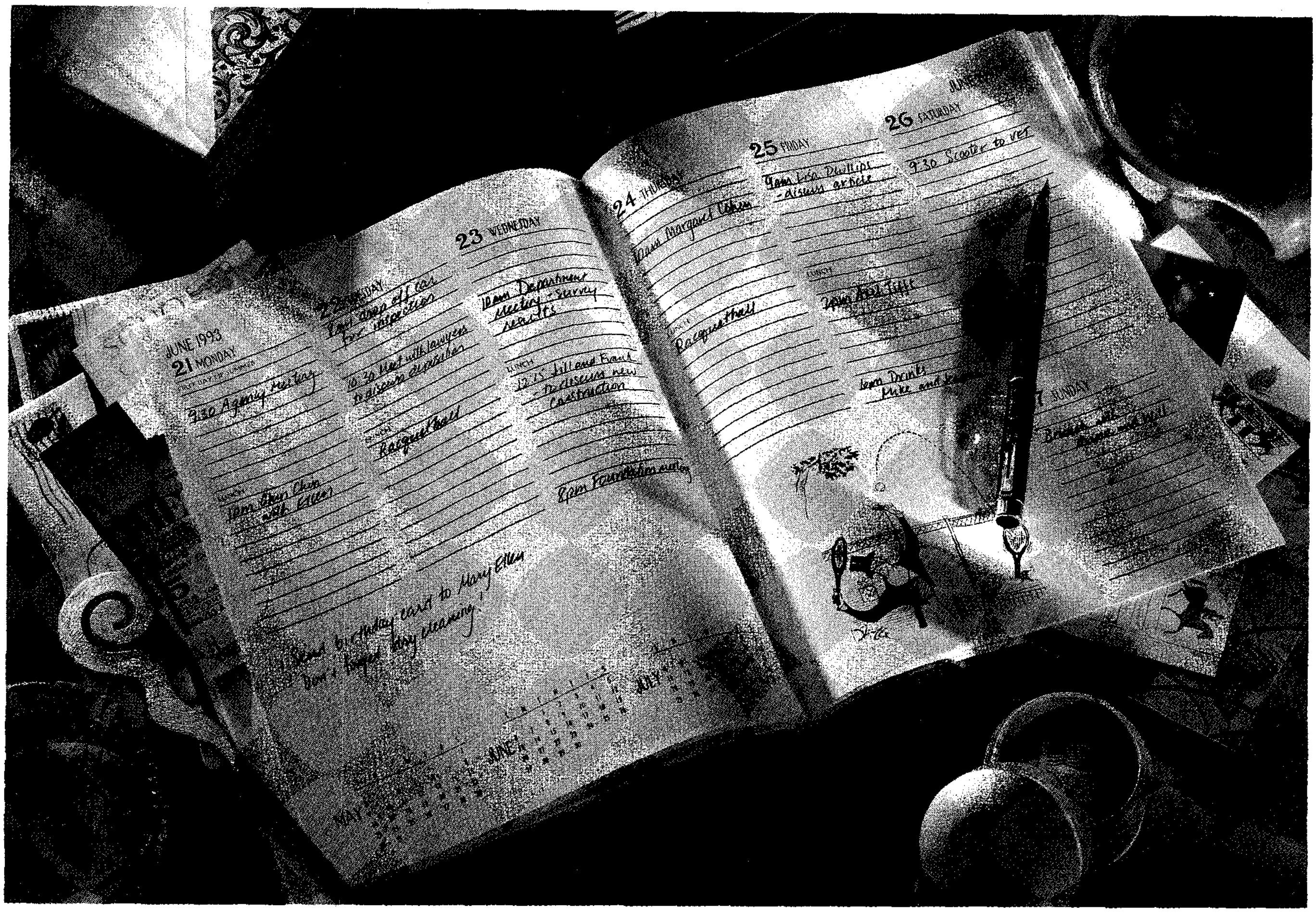

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weren't sure how it had happened, or why.

PASTY and mustached, Lon Mabon looks like Martin Mull on a bad-hair day—though, unlike Mull, he seems to have absolutely no sense of humor. While exhorting his supporters—about a hundred and thirty-five thousand religious fundamentalists, home-schoolers, and farmers—he maintains a serious the-end-of-the-world-is-coming tone. He is said to presume that everyone he meets is either with his cause or against it. A former dope-smoking California hippie who now favors sombre business suits, he likens the fight for Measure 9 to the fight for American independence, arguing that homosexual values are being forced on good, God-fearing citizens the way King George forced British taxes on the colonists.

Last month, the O.C.A. flew a man named Anthony Falzarano, a minister who claims to be a reformed homosexual, and Judith Reisman, a self-described child-protection expert, from Washington, D.C., to Oregon to speak in support of Measure 9. After Falzarano suggested that the media are controlled by "homosexuals in very high, key positions," Reisman said, "If you have special rights for homosexuals per se, as we are seeing, what I see is a clear avenue of recruitment of children." The O.C.A.'s handouts link homosexuality with pedophilia, bestiality, even murder. Headlines in a recent issue of the *Oregon Alliance*, an O.C.A. publication, include "HOMOSEXUAL LEADER CONFESSES TACTICS DRAWN FROM HITLER" and "HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR CAUSES AIDS CRISIS." The *Freedom Journal*, the organ of an O.C.A. affiliate, warns, "LIBERALS ATTEMPT TO EQUATE RACIAL AND ETHNIC HERITAGE WITH SODOMY." Mabon says of Measure 9, "This is an opportunity for us. I mean, how long have you been watching our society, our culture degenerate? Here we have a chance to change that around. And if we don't? Well, I personally know then that's more than I can bear."

THE scariest thing about the O.C.A.'s scare tactics is that they work. Last May, while Mabon was honing the theme "No Special Rights," the mostly white, mostly blue-collar town of Springfield voted in favor of a similar

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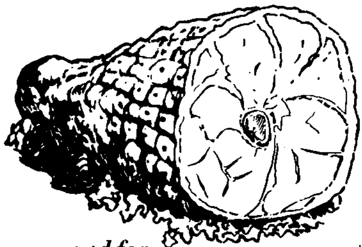

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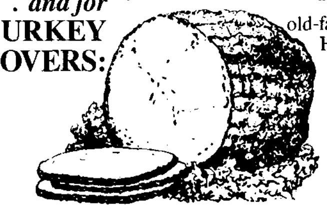

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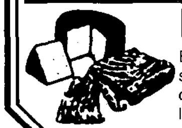

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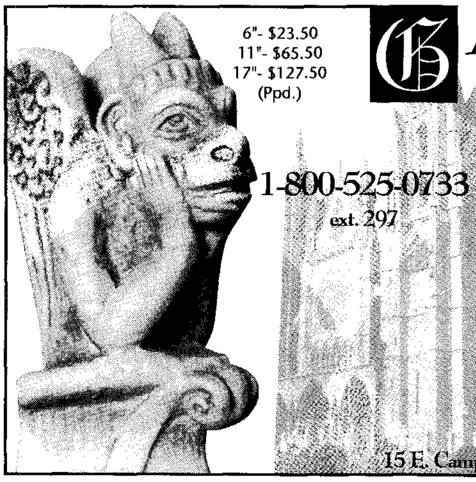

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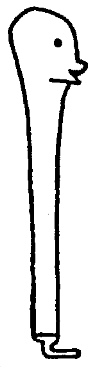

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measure by fifty-three per cent. The state's demographics resemble Springfield's more than they do those of the predominantly "No on 9" city of Portland. Opponents of Measure 9 have taken solace in two facts: that on the eve of the election a poll has shown fifty-seven per cent of the voters against the measure, thirty-five per cent in favor, and eight per cent undecided; and that eighty-two per cent of the voting population, the highest percentage ever, is expected to turn out for the election. But their solace is slippery: polling research done during both the Jesse Helms and the David Duke Senate races showed that voters tend to lie when their true opinion on an issue sounds bigoted. "It could be very, very close," Bill Lunch, a professor of political science at Oregon State University, says.

If Measure 9 passes, it will not be the first time that Oregon has shown its incongruous dual nature. Though the state had one of the first public libraries in the West, and though it has had an unusually open and machine-free political climate, it also has a long tradition of prejudice and discrimination. Oregon, in 1859, came into the union as a free state, but when it did it banned blacks from moving there. Oregon was a hotbed of Ku Klux Klan activity in the nineteen-twenties, thanks mostly to immigration from the South, and it was the site of some of the last lynchings above the Mason-Dixon Line. For years, its relatively small number of minorities attracted large numbers of skinheads and people of a Mabonesque ilk. Today, in light of the O.C.A.'s success, some Oregonians are beginning to wonder if the last few decades have been misspent. "Our leadership has been with things environmental," Chet Orloff, the executive director of the Oregon Historical Society, says. "It has not been in the social sphere. Because of that, I think that we're playing catch-up now."

The bitter irony of the Measure 9 battle is that Oregon, in its open-minded mode, was the first state to design precise laws that allow such a ballot measure to come easily to public referendum. Vic Atiyeh, who was the governor of Oregon when, in the early eighties, the cult of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh imported homeless people to a sixty-six-thousand-acre ranch in an attempt to stack the elections in Wasco County, says that this battle, like that one, has to be left up to the political process. "Back with the Rajneesh, people would tell me to do something about these people," he recalls, "but I would say, 'If you give me the power to do something to them, who's gonna be next?' This is an exercise in democracy, and I believe that the people of Oregon will defeat the O.C.A.'s ballot measure."

In the meantime, it's as if Oregon were being tested to see exactly how much tolerance it can tolerate.

EXCEPT for one man who regularly stands in Pioneer Courthouse Square wielding a sign that says "Homosexuality is wrong! It will never be right! It is not 'OK' to repent!," it is unusual to meet a supporter of Measure 9 in downtown Portland. Recently, though, I talked to an ardent Measure 9 supporter, a member of the city police department. This officer gave me detailed reasons for supporting Measure 9, but only on condition of anonymity; the officer was concerned that opponents of the measure—particularly undercover lesbians—would accost a supporter or vandalize a supporter's new car, and further believed that Tom Potter, the police chief, who had been a frequent target of the O.C.A. ever since he marched in Portland's gay-pride parade with his lesbian daughter, might go as far as to fire a person voting yes on Election Day.

Here is what the officer said: "I think there are a lot of people who are sick and tired of having this homosexual-agenda stuff shoved down their throats. I mean, for example, I don't know anybody in my immediate department who doesn't agree with Measure 9. I mean, a lot of people say that what people do in the confines of their own bedroom is their business, but it is and it isn't. We all have consciences, we all know what's wrong. I myself have a friend right now who is leading a homosexual life style, which we're trying to get her out of, and, let me tell you, she is just miserable. And, of course, Portland is a real mecca for homosexuals, and this is part of the reason as to why the crime rate doesn't go down, and for AIDS and some of the rampant homosexuality here. Let's face it, homosexuals are militant and they are violent. And they don't reproduce, so they have to go into the schools to recruit."

"FIRST, I thought that if Measure 9 passed, and was declared unconstitutional, I would move out of the state," Dana Dodd, a gay man who has had several friends beaten up over the last few months, said the other day. "Then I thought that if it passed, and stayed on the books, I would move out of the U.S." Dodd, who owns a hair salon in Portland, continued, "But then, finally, I decided that I'm a fighter and that if it passes I'm going to stay and just plaster the entire front of my place with signs that say I'm a homosexual and see if I get taken to court. I would be willing to lose my business, really. With all this, that would not be frightening to me."

Not everyone is as courageous as Dana Dodd. There is disagreement over Measure 9's constitutionality (some experts think it would be struck down), but many people, gay and straight, longtime residents as well as newly arrived windsurfers and urban-planning wonks, are now saying they won't wait to hear from the Supreme Court: if the measure passes, or even if it comes close, they will leave Oregon. The Chamber of Commerce, fearing economic censure of the sort that Arizona was slapped with when it refused to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, vehemently opposes Measure 9. (Twenty million dollars' worth of convention business is on hold pending the vote's outcome.) California, the state that looks to Oregon for vacations and retirement, has turned a nervous ear north. Even Gus Van Sant, the publicity-shy local film legend and the director, most recently, of "My Own Private Idaho," has gone to Hollywood to raise money publicly for the "No on 9" fight. Van Sant has remarked that if Measure 9 passes, his current project, the film version of Tom Robbins' "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues," could be considered illegal, because it deals with a lesbian relationship—in fact, his film-

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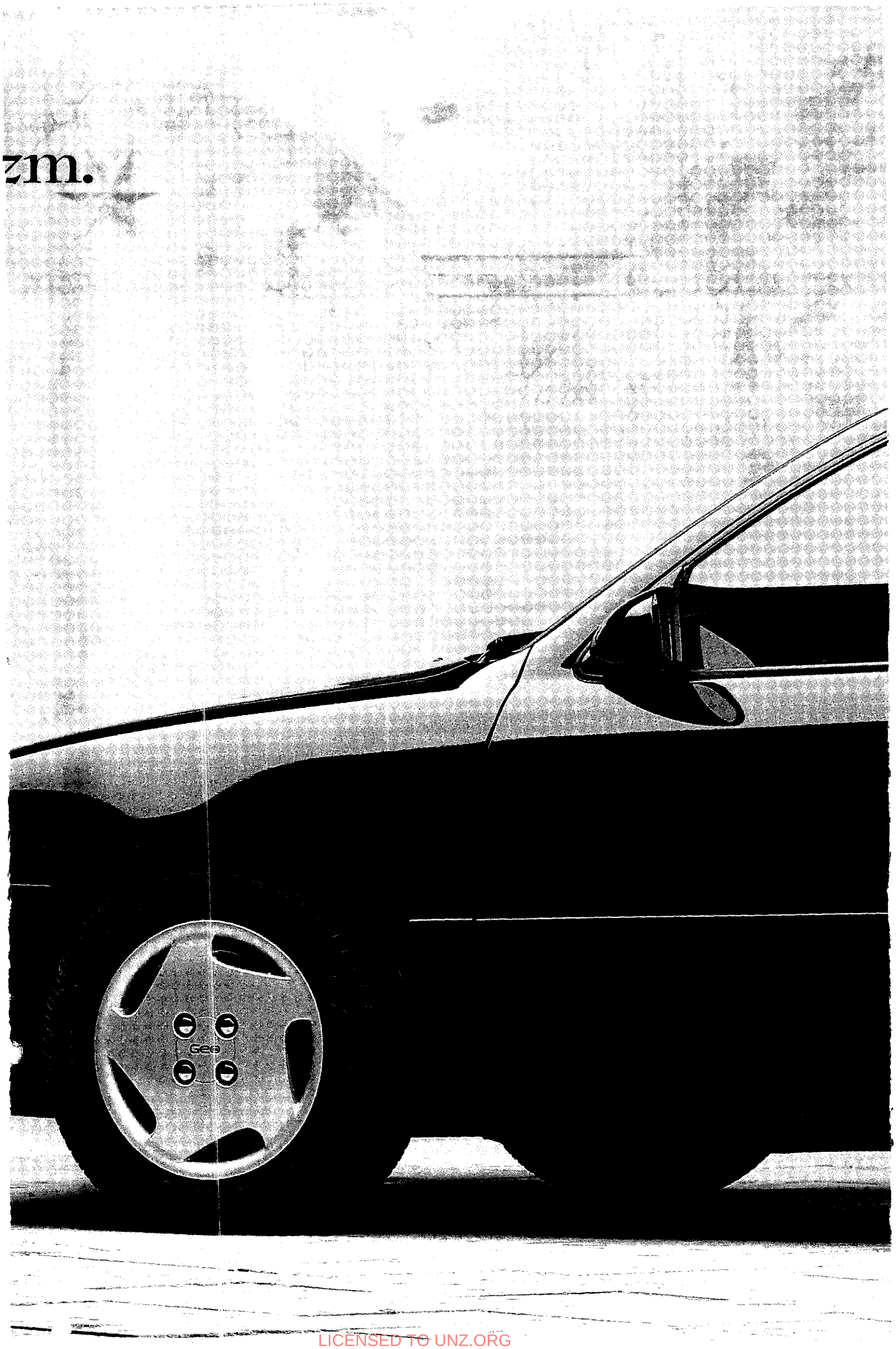
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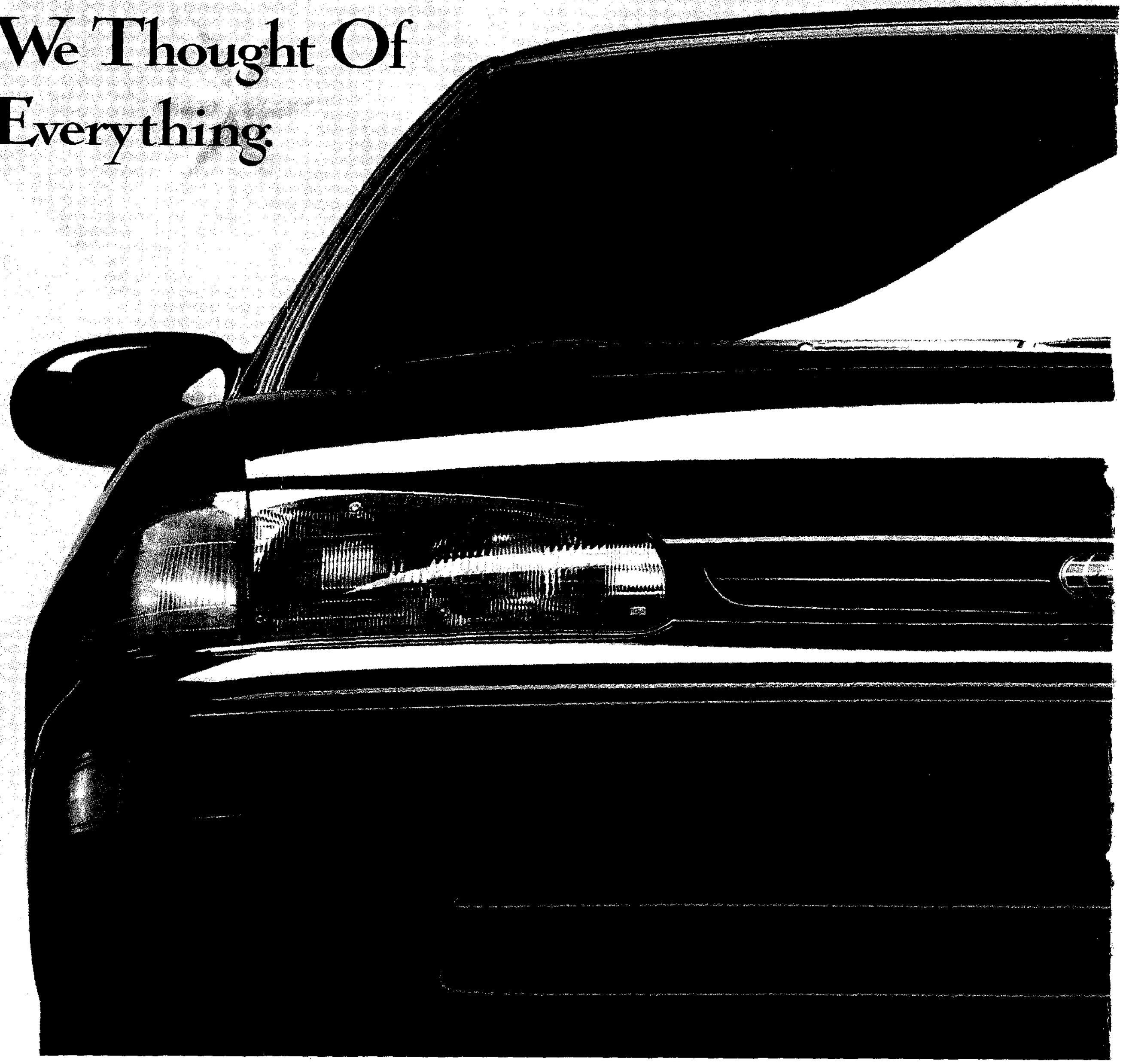

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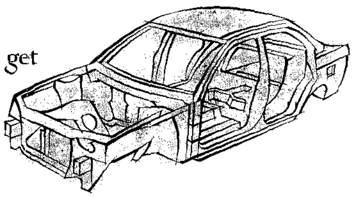

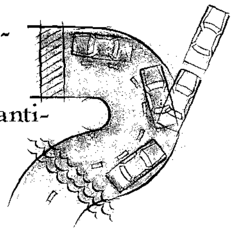

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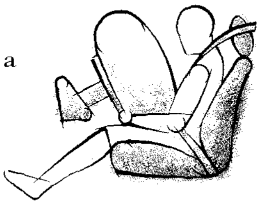

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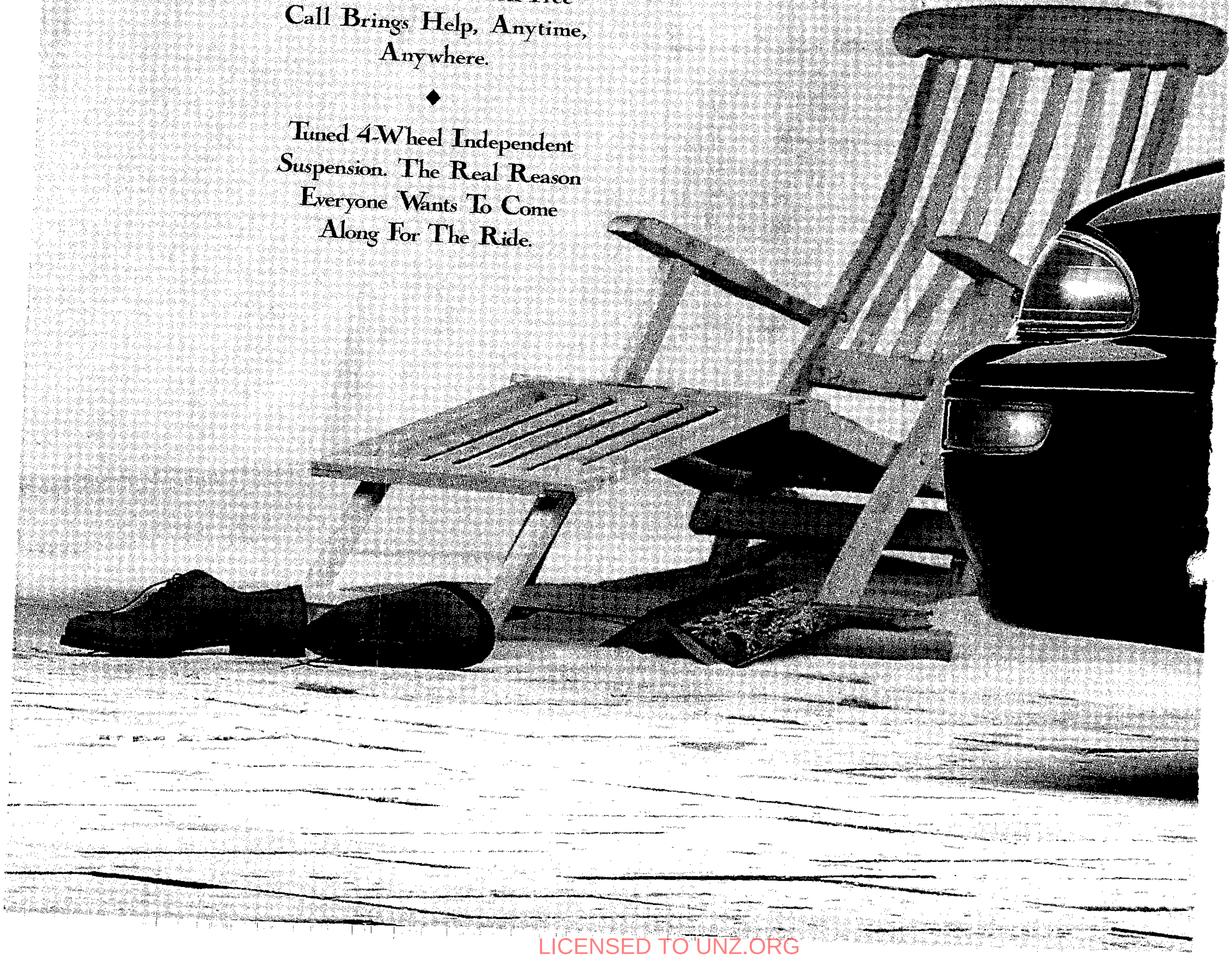

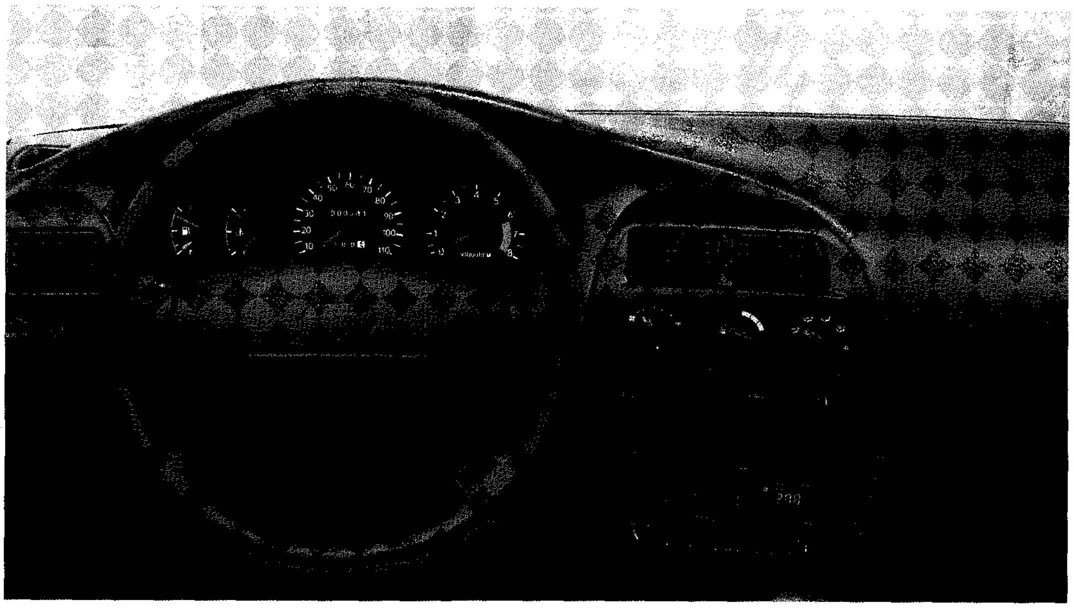

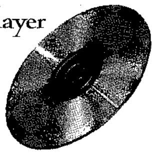

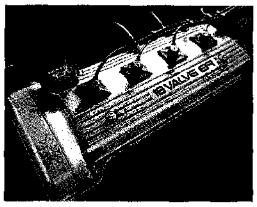

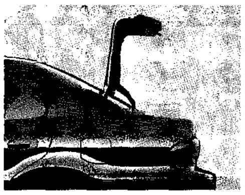

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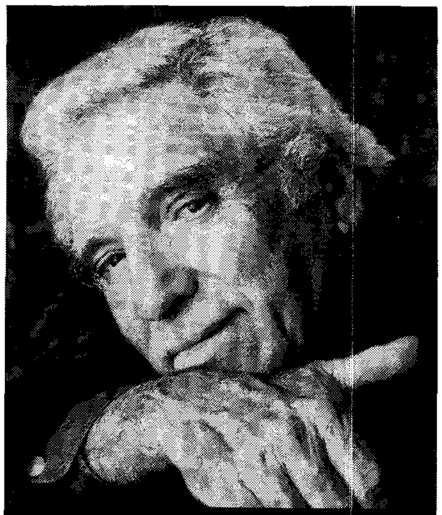
making might be prohibited altogether. "It's not whether I want to," he has said of continuing his work in Oregon. "It's whether I legally could."

The Reverend Jim Galluzzo is one of those Oregonians who think that even a victory at the voting booths will be too late to save the state. Father Galluzzo was in bed, in the rectory of St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church in Hillsboro, early one Sunday morning, when the fire alarm went off. He raced downstairs to find the rectory in flames and the phrases "Yes on 9," "Kill Gays + Catholics," and "We hate gays" spray-painted in the sanctuary. Over the past few months, Father Galluzzo has visited in the hospital parishioners who have been beaten up, talked to people who have had tires slashed, and consoled a local family whose house was also spray-painted, probably because one of the children is gay. "This is just a testing ground for them," Father Galluzzo says of the O.C.A. "If they win here, they'll just walk through the South and the Midwest. And even if they lose, even if they get only twenty per cent, they'll say they won. They're going to say, 'Look, we got twenty per cent of the vote in Oregon, a liberal state—think of what we can do somewhere else.' "

That would be the ultimate slap in the face—to see the success of Measure 9 repeated elsewhere in the United States on the very strength of Oregon's liberal image. Lon Mabon has begun bragging that communities across the country are asking for their own versions of Measure 9; Portlanders have already begun defending their civil-rights sensitivities to out-of-towners. And events that might have been thought of as anomalies a year ago are feared these days as portents of a new order: in October, Phil Stanford, the *Oregonian's* watered-down Jimmy Breslin, suggested there may be something to the claim, made at a local lecture by a writer named David Irving, that the Holocaust is a myth. A page in Oregon's history is audibly turning, and you can hear it when Father Galluzzo says the kinds of thing that few forward-thinking Oregonians would have thought it possible to say a year ago, as Measure 9 was just getting off the ground. "I'm not blaming any particular group for any of this," he says. "But this atmosphere, this feeling of hatred, it's really here." ♦



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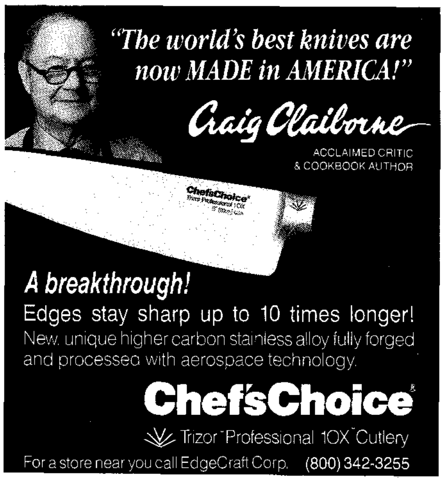

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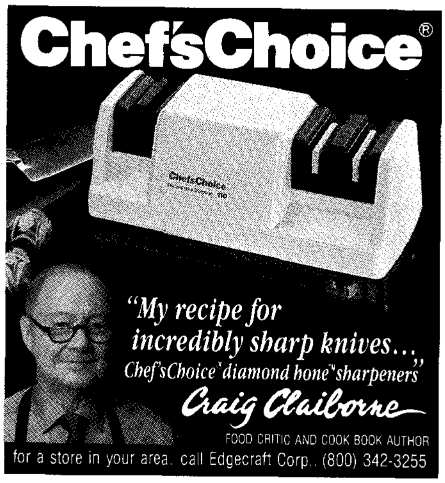

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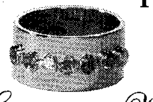

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DEPARTMENT OF MODEST PROPOSALS

TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE

by Jonathan Rubinstein

On a brief visit to Russia recently, I took a tour of the Lefortovo Prison, in Moscow. Built in the eighteenth century, around the time that Tom Jefferson sat down in a Philadelphia tavern to write those words which remain our greatest achievement, it is one of Russia's largest prisons, with now more than five thousand inmates. The warden, guiding his guests along dank and evil-smelling corridors, said proudly that there was almost no violence among the prisoners, no need for guards to use force, and only one case of AIDS. These claims are all the more remarkable, if true, because many inmates have not been convicted of anything. In Russia, trials are still reserved for the guilty. Suspects are kept as long as five years in jail while the authorities make certain.

In a dark corridor lined on both sides with heavy, windowless locked doors, two men, accompanied by a guard, were pushing a trolley. They stopped at each door, opened a trap, and tossed something inside. I was startled by the smell of fresh-baked bread. At each cell, the baker's helpers tossed in five loaves. The warden, apparently reading confusion or censure in my face, assured us that this was only the bread course. The prisoners were fed three meals a day. Twenty-three hours of each day, they were confined, five in a cell. "These are all people who have done something bad," he said. "We have no political prisoners in Russia anymore."

He invited me to look through a spyhole. Hesitant, feeling acutely a violation of the privacy we cherish and take for granted, I crabbed my face toward that Ancient Aperture. Inside were five shirtless Men, one naked, all in a space the size of a master bathroom, with five metal-frame beds and a disgusting toilet, lit by a single bulb. They were doing nothing special, but they remain for me frozen in place forever, a panel from a Brueghel triptych.

The bread was excellent.

Later, after showing us where the peasant radical Pugachev had been drawn and quartered, the warden sat smoking, his simple, cramped office adorned only with a portrait of Feliks Dzerzhinsky made by inmates in the nineteen-thirties. Of course he was not bothered that there were five in a cell. They were not ill-treated, lived not more crowded than they were used to. They ate well, were warm enough in winter, much warmer in summer. He smiled. When told such a prison would not be Tolerated in America, he shrugged and lit another cigarette. "Remember, we have no prisoners of conscience in Russia. Only criminals. The Gulag is empty."

The Gulag is empty. For the first time in three centuries, the camps and prison towns of Siberia are deserted. EMPTY! With one mighty Effort we can restore Justice in America and help Russia regain a measure of Pride.

We must RENT the Gulag and send Russia our Felons.

Divided about the causes of crime, guilty about the proportion of Minorities incarcerated, Confused about the purposes of prison, we have spent great sums to give inmates better living conditions than most of them have ever known. But with the States struggling to remain solvent and the Federal government financing itself by indebting people whose parents will be born in the next century, we are out of Space.

Judges regularly order prisoners released to assure the Privacy and Comfort of those who arrive. Triage has become Liberation, spreading Contempt for our Institutions equally among the Guilty and the Innocent. It has also had this further unfortunate Consequence: it is encouraging an Appetite for pain and punishment. Those who feel Anguish and Shame because they fear to leave their houses; Frustration because they pay for Security they do not have; loss of Self-respect because they know they are no longer Free or Brave—more and more they Enjoy thinking of Fellow-Americans drowning in their own vomit

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in the gas chamber, being Raped in prison, Living in Hell.

Russia, a country with nothing to sell but weapons and raw materials, has a Tradition of punishment, bred in the service of Absolutism and all that we Detest, which can be recast to serve Justice. Geography and Climate have no politics. Siberia is just another name.

As China imports nuclear waste, Holland wastepaper, and England garbage, Russia can take our Felons. Think what an electrifying effect it will have when the judge looks down at the defendant and says, "Young Person, you have earned five years in Siberia. I earnestly hope you will make the most of this opportunity."

Russia is a congenial place for Americans to visit, because it is the only country (except Kuwait) where we are now admired. It is possible there, if one is not careful, to forget how Dear has been the price of our victory in the Cold War. Our Russian hosts either do not know or are too cordial to mention that they went belly-up just a half second before us. Hoping that we can accomplish the same miracle for them that was achieved in Japan and West Germany, the very proud Slavs bite their lips and patiently listen to our advice. They are most patient when the advice is that We pony up billions in aid. Fortunately, few Americans are listening.

Of course, it is in our Interest to help Russia in its Momentous Lurch. The chance to extend Freedom eleven more time zones must not be ignored.

My visit left me with the impression that Russians need everything except vodka and guns. Freedom is an abstraction to them. They have never been permitted to do anything, and those who might have done were murdered by Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, and the petty Czars who followed. We should bring thousands of young Russians to America for a year and put them to work—pumping gas, stocking grocery shelves, dressing windows, writing advertising copy, going on police patrol. They must learn that freedom is nourished and renewed only by individuals committed to the Dignity of their own Acts.

In return, Russia can make available to us its incomparable Geography—the vast, empty Tundra, its glacial Patience and Indifference. There we can ship our Anguish, Shame, Frustration, and Confusion. We will restore Self-confidence and Pride, renew Hope, eliminate divisive Debate about the purposes of penology, return thousands of corrections officers to productive work, give our Felons their only chance to begin life afresh. And all this can be accomplished with Economy.

We should make a National Commitment to an America felon-free by the Millennium. If hundreds of thousands of people are able to get into America illegally each year, it is possible to ship out eight hundred thousand. Imagine the Surge of Pride when we dynamite our first maximum-security prison.

A chorus of protest will arise from contractors, suppliers, and corrections unions shocked and horrified at the idea of depriving any American of the right to do time close to family, friends, and associates. But nothing in the Constitution prohibits Exile. States regularly send troublesome prisoners to other states. In ancient Greece, Exile was a common punishment, often grasped eagerly by those who faced as the alternative dishonor or death. It was not then and is not here now suggested that our felons be exiled for life. When they have done their time, they may return, Transformed in body and spirit.

I am not proposing Transportation as practiced by the English, who shipped their criminals as Slave Labor first to the New World and later to Australia, never again to see Hearth or Home. Only those under sentence of death or of life without parole will be given permanent residence on the Tundra. Is being alive in Siberia worse than being hanged, shot, gassed, or injected in the Lower Forty-eight? Which is Cruelty: toiling in the open, bracing expanses of Siberia or languishing for years on Death Row, waking to wonder if today you get to eat Boeuf Wellington?

Anne Burgess

The advantages of Exile to Siberia are so numerous that the Objections people will raise, as they always do when confronted by a New Idea, will melt away. First, hundreds of thousands of Citizens now living without hope will have their Fate returned to their own hands. Second, a desire for Revenge will be appeased, permitting Harmony to be restored. Third, thousands of Citizens now required to earn their living by asserting Authority over others will no longer have to perform work so damaging to our Idea of Equality. Fourth, Crime will begin to Decline and, as our Reformed return home with their prideful stories of the Rigor of the North, will decline even more rapidly. Fifth, all these Good Things will be accomplished with fewer people on the public payroll and many fewer billions of dollars.

Free your minds of the vile images of the Gulag, forced labor in the mines near the White Sea, the slow death and quick murder that all Russia's czars from Ivan the Terrible to Gorbachev imposed on their suffering subjects. They exiled people for imagining that life could be different, tortured them for daring to think. Guards were selected for their brutality, and common criminals practiced their depraved Arts, serving their masters by Tormenting and Informing on the politicals, people of conscience, and the religious.

All Our exiles will be criminals whose success depends on Coöperation with each other. If any do commit crimes in Russia, they will be tried in Russian courts under Russian law. Of course, they will serve their Russian time in a Russian prison, possibly Lefortovo. As American citizens they will be provided with counsel at our expense, and no effort will be spared to get them a Speedy and Fair trial.

A Treaty between the United States and Russia must be negotiated, regulating the terms and conditions under which our Felons will do their time in Siberia. A survey must be made immediately, and estimates drawn up of the places available. Using Russian labor supervised by Americans, our contractors will improve and add to existing housing. One virtue of Siberia is that it makes irrelevant the detailed guidelines elaborated by our courts for the privacy

Where hope can be confirmed, face by face.

The horrors you hear about Somalia are true. Yet the faces above are also real. These refugee children are fed daily at a communal kitchen in Mogadishu run by the *American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)*, a Quaker agency.

At Afgoi, where children were eating tree leaves, *AFSC* feeds kids at two orphanages, provides a doctor and nurse, medicines, fuel, soap, and is also replacing mattresses because armed bands looted everything. Amid the chaos of no functioning government or public services, we fund a local teacher and provide school supplies.

Having done development work in Somalia for over 10 years, *AFSC* remained in place even during the war. The Omaria Farming Co-op, for example, thrives as a hopeful model—360 families of mixed clans farm 120 hectares communally. We provided 30 cattle, sheds, seeds, a maize grinding machine, and fund the Somali director and veterinarian. *AFSC* is now setting up two communal kitchens for hungry people in six villages near the Omaria Co-op.

There's hope in Somalia—in the faces of people fed, in farm co-ops, *in our faith in initiatives taken by* the Somalis themselves. Your gift will help save children and increase the food supply. On behalf of those you aid, thank you for choosing *AFSC* to implement your generosity.

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and comfort of Convicts. Imagine the entire prison population of Joliet or Attica transported into a scene from "Dances with Wolves," without the buffalo, a bit colder in winter and a bit hotter in summer. No bars, no walls. The nearest train station five hundred miles away.

Our felons will be provided with decent housing and the clothes necessary to live and work in temperatures ranging from -90° F. to 110°. There is plenty of firewood to be cut and coal to be dug. They will be guaranteed a minimum supply of food but required to farm wherever that is possible. They will be given the equipment, supplies, and support to do it successfully. If they want to eat fresh chicken, they may. All they need do is tend the chicken coop. There should be no communal kitchens unless the residents elect to establish and operate them. There will be few guards and supervisors, since there is no place to go. These communities will be self-regulating, self-supporting, and, within the terms of the Treaty and Russian law, self-governing. These can be Therapeutic Communities, integrated sexually and racially: young men and women living together, dependent on each other not for their survival but for every Inch they get above that line.

Family members must be offered every Inducement and Encouragement to accompany their Loved One into exile, since it will be impossible to arrange for Family Visits. Housing for families of any kind will be available; the Sojourners can build more.

The guiding principle is to make felons responsible for their own lives. They will not be ruled by people who can grant and withdraw Privilege, nor live where bribery and brutality create advantage. They will have it within their power to make their lives better than the comfortable minimum assured. Challenge will replace bureaucracy: Siberia has its own Rules.

In a few years we may hope to see the irrelevance of every lawyer specializing in "prisoner's rights." Possibly the most Decent and Hardy of these people, who have a sentimental or philosophical fondness for what used to be called the Soviet Experiment, will wish to help our Exiles organize. Others may go, too—*missionaries*, for example. Surely, foundations will provide grants to support activities where the only overhead is the Great Northern Sky. Many more volunteers may go because the cost of living in Siberia is far less than in Ann Arbor, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Berkeley, Cambridge, or East Los Angeles.

Who should be the first felons to go is not as simple a question as it might seem. The worst should go first, you say. Well, yes, but is it a good idea to create a community composed entirely of murderers? Hmm. Penologists, sociologists, and prisoner advocates must be consulted immediately.

As for the class of Felons deserving the honor of being the Founders of this patriotic Experiment, I propose Everyone serving a sentence for violation of Public Trust. This includes, first, all elected Officials and Civil Servants who take bribes and all those who pay them; police officers who deprive people of their civil rights; corporate Officers who defraud government; and clergy and professional people who exploit the consciences and bodies of those entrusted to their care—specifically, those who sexually abuse, steal from trusts, or abscond with money raised for charity. Next, I would send those who loot the Food Stamp program, Medicare, housing subsidies, and farm programs. Then I would send those who defraud the public: the stock swindlers and Savings and Loan scoundrels. Then I would ship out all the Mafias: Dixie, Colombian, Asian, Cosa Nostra. Only when these are all gone should we send the Rest.

These Criminals look forward eagerly to returning to Society. Many have assets squirrelled away, which they will use upon release if they are not managing them from prison. Imagine how much firewood will be cut and stacked under the direction of John Gotti. Within regulations, they should be allowed to spend their own funds for permanent improvements. Which settlement would not wish to have Michael Milken? Of course, they should be permitted a tax deduction for these expenditures.

While the Treaty is being negotiated and the arrangements are prepared, each of the fifty states must decide if it will participate. Meanwhile, the Federal government must immediately commit itself to the removal, by the year 2000, of the forty thousand felons currently in Federal custody at an annual cost of more than two billion dollars. If the first thousand felons are exiled by the end of 1993, three thousand the next year, six thousand in 1995, and then eight to ten thousand a year, we will have emptied all Federal prisons by the end of the century. Beginning in 1996, all newly convicted felons will go directly to Siberia. In 1997 the first Federal prisons will be blown up.

Regardless of the negotiated price per exile and the start-up and support costs, I do not see how the Federal program alone can fail to save us at least twenty billion dollars by the end of the century.

By 1995, at the latest, the States must make their Choice. In some States, local pride may dictate keeping local felons at home. That is a privilege of statehood, though in time it will mean contending with a migration of Career Criminals from States that are not too proud to Exile. A Federal-State Commission must be created to determine how felons will be drawn from the participant States. Not all can go. Many will have served their time before they get the chance. But some of these may get a second chance!

The Debate, once started, will rage night and day. The F.C.C. will not be able to keep up with the complaints filed by outraged listeners to Talk Radio. But here is another virtue of first exiling abusers of privilege: it will stifle complaints that this is a proposal for Genocide, or a Conspiracy to rid the country of the Poor. I do not want to rid us of anything but Failure. Half the people now doing Time in America will do it again within three years of release. I look forward eagerly to the return of all our Citizens from their Sojourn in Siberia. The few Incorrigibles must know that next time they get a one-way Ticket. But I believe the great majority will be changed forever by the Challenge of fashioning their own destinies a thousand miles from Anywhere.

Noah's was a simple task compared with this. He was preserving Biodiversity; we are attempting to save a Nation. We want to reduce our felon population to nil from more than eight hundred thousand. It is a large number. But remember how quickly we sent a half-million Persons to the Persian Gulf, and even larger numbers to Vietnam. We can do it! The States are currently spending more than ten billion dollars annually on prisons. I estimate that by the year 2000 we will already have saved fifty billion dollars. And there is the incalculable value of saved lives.

Each community will be supplied with a print and music library; film and video will be available. We will do more. A satellite link will permit the communities to be in touch with each other and with Home. It will provide News, Sports, Entertainment, and education. Many Exiles will become fluent in Russian, even literate in their Native Language. America will not forget its wayward children. Our Felons will be visited by prison officials, journalists, and advocates, engaging the Noblest Instincts of Everyone.

A Board of Visitors will Witness the progress of our exiles and report to us, keeping alive in our minds and hearts the Daily Struggle. For Chairman there is no finer choice than former President Jimmy Carter; warm, loving, a tireless traveller, he can go by Jet, courtesy of B.C.C.I. Others who could serve include Professor Lawrence Tribe, Charles Colson, Spike Lee, Geraldo Rivera, Rudolph Giuliani, Madonna, Ambassador Andrew Young, Kevin Costner, Elizabeth Taylor, George Steinbrenner, and the Reverends Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson.

We are becoming a truly Global Community. We can utilize the best that Russia has to offer, turning it to our Purpose and Russia's Profit. Our exiles will not be transplanted permanently, like Volga Germans, but will provide a pool of vital talent and initiative, which, once properly tempered, will give substance to an amity between the two Giants who Tocqueville said would inherit the world.

You think it is too good to be True? Fearful of crossing swords with Unions and other Interests, will Congress refuse to act? I assure you that within two years the Question of Exile will be the only Test of every Congressperson's Electability. All right, you say, but it will be tied up in the courts forever. The outpouring of Patriotic Enthusiasm and Interest will propel the Question before the Supreme Court. The Merits are so great, the innate Justice and Fairness so Clear, the Utility so Manifest, I am not in the Least Doubt how the Court will Decide.

On to Murmansk! ♦

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

EDWARD GOREY AND THE TAO OF NONSENSE

by Stephen Schiff

MANY of Edward Gorey's most fervent devotees think he's (a) English and (b) dead. Actually, he has never so much as visited either place. But his work has imprinted itself on the American consciousness as something from long ago and far away. Most of us by now have seen it somewhere or other—the sets and costumes he designed for the hit stage version of "Dracula" in 1978, the swooning logos for the PBS television series "Mystery!," or possibly the hundreds of book covers and newspaper illustrations he has turned out over the last forty years. Less prominent, but more important, are the small books that he has been producing in quantity since 1953—albums of enchanting pen-and-ink drawings accompanied by carefully hand-lettered texts that are spooky, funny, and, in the end, often quite unnerving. The books are like the remnants of a once proud civilization whose decline and fall have resulted not from dwindling armies or crumbling economies but from an invasion of the inexplicable—random brutality, spates of angst and ennui, odd words and odder weapons, and the kind of skittering beasties you catch only out of the corner of your eye.

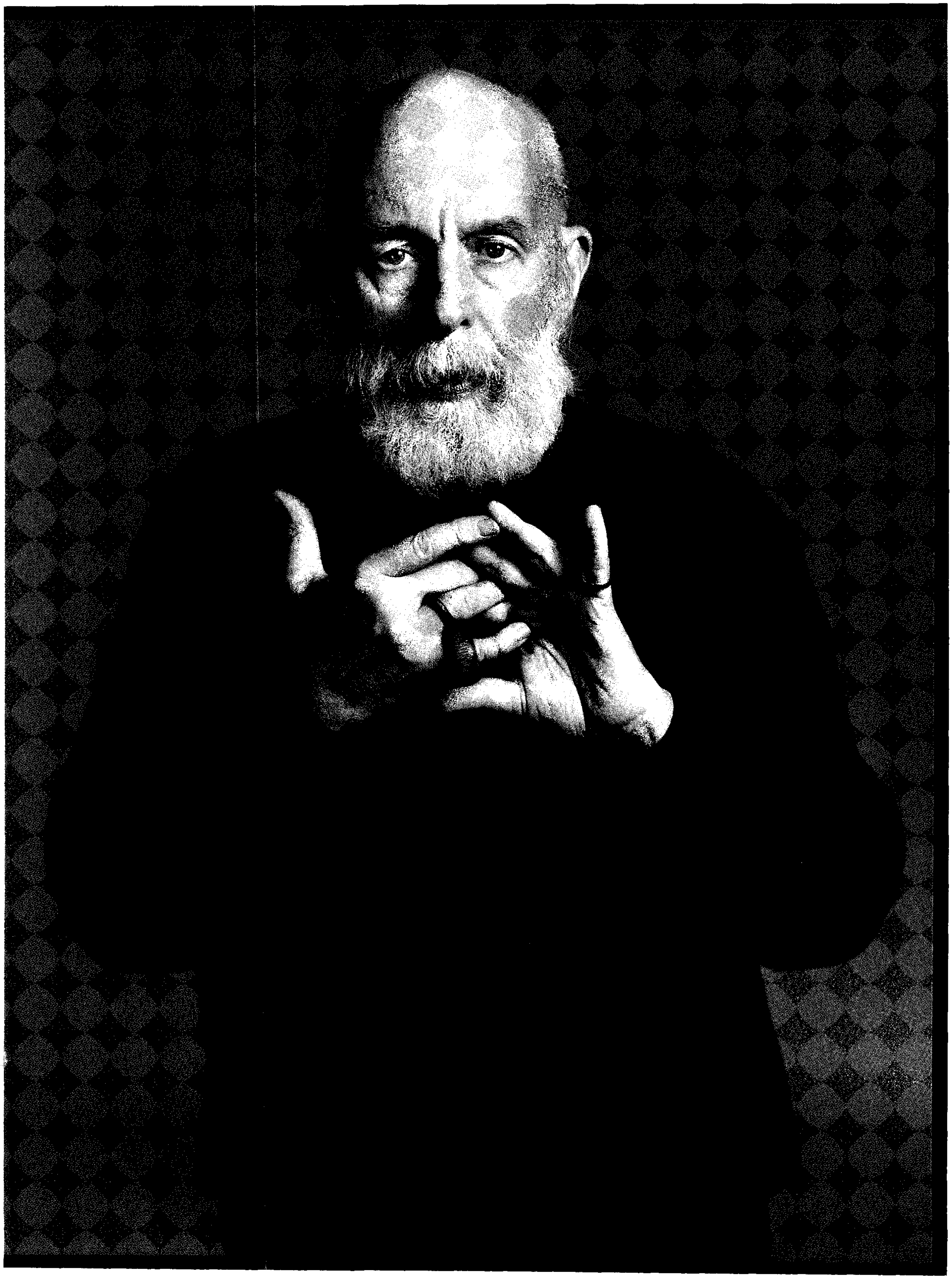
Not surprisingly, perhaps, Gorey himself appears to be a migrant from another century. Beneath a baldish head and trifocals he wears a thick cloud of mustache and a white beard in the profuse, flowing style of a grand British litterateur—Trollope, maybe, or Shaw. It's not hard to imagine him sinking into the hungry upholstery of some mahogany-panelled library, snipping a Havana before the roaring fire, and then turning toward the BBC camera to recite, in lugubrious tones, from his own neo-Edwardian prose. But Gorey is in every way a surprise. If you expect orotund pronouncements from beneath that cascading beard, what you get instead is a voice that's high, nasal, and unmistakably campy. "Actually, I find myself more and more glued to the TV set," he says, with a snort of mock exasperation. "I'm passionately devoted to reruns. Like, for instance, up until just last week, late in the afternoon, you could watch three different 'Golden Girls' reruns in the space of an hour and a half. I've seen them all fifteen times, I'm sure. And also I'm very partial to certain surrealist sitcoms. There was one called 'Stat,' a medical one. It had—oh dear. One of those actors whose name is Ron."

Gorey's conversation is speckled with whoops and giggles and noisy, theatrical sighs. He can sustain a girlish falsetto for a very long time and then dip into a tone of clogged-sinus skepticism that's worthy of Eve Arden. He wears a gold earring in each ear, and there are rings on his fingers—heavy brass and iron ones, arranged in piles. As he talks, he flaps his slender hands, and the rings clank.

We are sitting in the kitchen of his rambling Cape Cod home—"It's the only bearable room in the house"—and when you see him up close, like this, the beard and glasses and oddly severe gray-blue eyes come to seem a kind of old-codger disguise. For, at sixty-seven, Gorey is improbably youthful, his skin unwrinkled and spotless and baby-pink, his sprigs of white hair as fine as a newborn's. He's a lanky man who never sits in a chair when he can flop, and, though his presence is as drastically stylized as his books, he appears to be without pretension. Gorey is opinionated, and even, at times, vicious, but he's almost childishly unaware that anyone might find what he says objectionable; one has the impression that if he actually discovered himself giving offense, the remorse would overwhelm him. Listening to the peaks and troughs of his inflections may make you feel as though everyone else on earth were speaking in a monotone, but there is also a danger of not taking him seriously enough: of mistaking him for a standard-issue small-town eccentric who, for his own good, should probably never have been granted cable.

Yet Gorey turns out to be a man of enormous erudition, his intake of televised trash merely part of a larger cultural voraciousness. During the thirty years he spent in New York, from 1953 to 1983, he became renowned in certain circles for attending virtually every performance of the New York City Ballet, always wearing the same picturesque getup: the beard, of course, which melted into a floor-length fur coat; bluejeans and slim white tennis shoes; a long scarf and, often, a necklace or pendant; a variety of massive rings. His appearance was half bongo-drum beatnik, half fin-de-siècle dandy. Night after night (and matinée after matinée), Gorey would spend intermissions on a bench at the left side of the New York State Theatre's promenade, and a coven of prominent balletomanes would gather around him—to "tear their hair out over what they'd just seen," according to one of them, the critic Arlene Croce. Gorey was vociferous in his admiration for City Ballet's great choreographer, George Balanchine, and when Balanchine died, in 1983, he took it as his cue to move out of New York entirely—an act of aestheticism worthy of Oscar Wilde. But Gorey's learning doesn't end with the ballet. He has also read more novels, examined more paintings, listened to more classical music, and seen more movies than many specialists in those fields. He has roomed with the poet Frank O'Hara, has illustrated Samuel Beckett and T. S. Eliot, and, during his Harvard days, just after the Second World War, he befriended and influenced a throng of future literary stars from Alison Lurie to John Ashbery. He can converse as lucidly on "The Tale of Genji," the films of Feuillade, and the legato line of the ballerina Diana Adams as on the more elusive charms of "Knots Landing." None of which would matter very much if he were not himself an artist and writer of genius.

His books have never attracted more than a cult audience, though when they were gathered together in a series of anthologies ("Amphigorey," "Amphigorey



Edward Gorey, photographed by Richard Avedon on Cape Cod, 1992.

Too," and "Amphigorey Also"), they sold modestly well. In New York, a small squadron of Gorey devotees has been trying for several frustrating years to make his name a household word; he seems to tolerate their efforts, but can't bring himself to participate much. "Edward has kept himself protected from success," says his friend Clifford Ross, an artist and producer who has known him for over twenty years. "I was telling him on the phone about some of the projects we were working on for him, but he wasn't responding. Finally he said, 'Oh. I suppose that means now I can die.' Sometimes with him nothing happens, because nothing is exactly what he wants to happen."

Still, a lot is happening at the moment. An evening of musical theatre called "Amphigorey," which has already enjoyed a successful run with Cambridge's American Repertory Theatre, is being prepared for a New York opening this winter. It's an adaptation of various Gorey works, published and unpublished, including "The Blue Aspic," about a psychotic opera fan; "The Admonitory Hippopotamus," in which a mysterious pachyderm ruins a woman's life by uttering a cryptic phrase over and over in the manner of Poe's raven; and "The Curious Sofa: A Pornographic Work," which follows a grape-eating demirep named Alice through a series of unspecified encounters with various "well-favoured" men, women, and sheepdogs. (It contains the immortal line "Still later Gerald did a terrible thing to Elsie with a saucepan.") Ross is joining with Jim Henson Productions to develop a prime-time CBS series based on Gorey's work; they hope to get six episodes on the air next summer. And he is organizing a major Gorey retrospective at the Huntington Library, near Los Angeles, to coincide, two or three years from now, with an Abrams monograph.

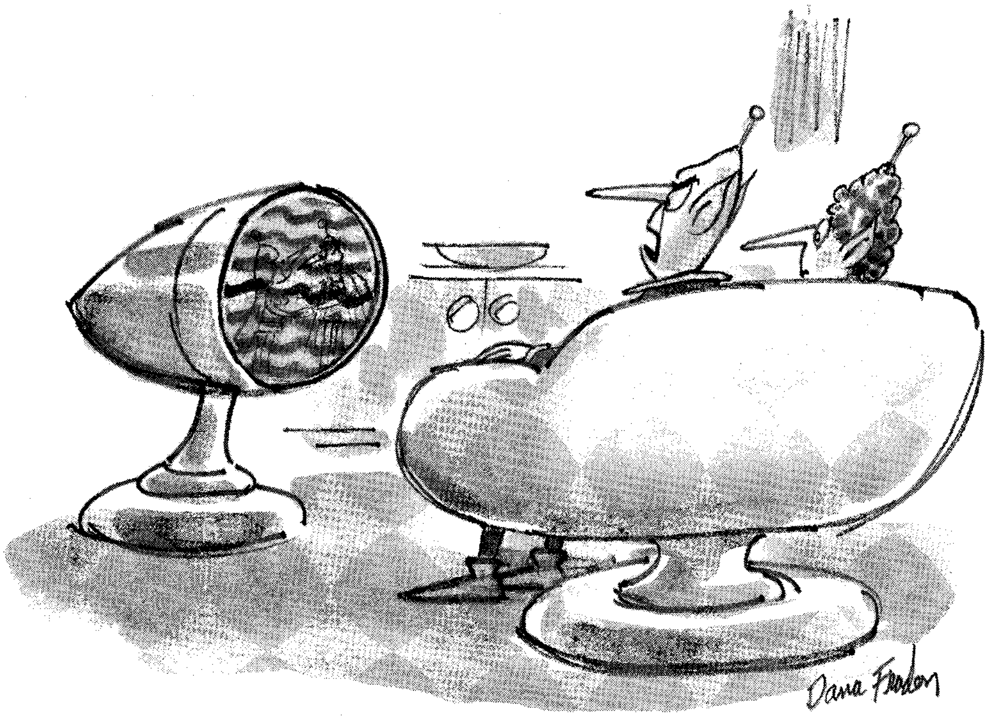
When I ask Gorey how he feels about this spasm of promotion, he thrusts his head back and looses one of his hyperbolic sighs. "It's very sweet if somebody wants to do this," he says. "But you'd better be prepared, because it probably isn't going to happen. Besides, you know, I find it difficult to help out or collaborate, and since I don't want to leave the Cape, or anything, the only way I could collaborate would be if someone came up here for a couple of months and sat around."

Sitting around is mostly what he does. Gorey is a confirmed recluse, and really always was, even in the days when he was so obsessively out on the town. "If I'm working very hard, which is very seldom, the last thing I want to do in order to relax is be with people and babbling away and so forth," he says. "So I go to the movies or read a book or watch any of my thousands of tapes upstairs. Most of my friends in New York were my friends because we were all so busy going to things we had no time to do anything else. I might never have seen people if I didn't see them that way. Social events—*foof.* You know."

I ask whether he was ever a partygoer.

"No. I'm slightly deaf—more than slightly. And for years I've had a terrible time at intermissions and things. I just stand there smiling sweetly, and I wonder what everybody's *talk*ing about, because I can't hear one word in *ten* from the background noise. And also when I talk to people I really like to talk to them, and not just exchange pleasantries and wonder which of us is going to try to get away first. Most social occasions leave me less than enthralled. I mean, you read about these wonderful parties at Lady Ottoline Morrell's and everybody was there and everybody was so brilliant and the conversation was just transcendental, and I don't believe this for one minute. There have been winters up here where I saw hardly anyone, and I don't remember feeling particularly bothered by it."

Friends are at a loss to explain the darkness in his work, because they detect none in the man himself. Still, Gorey can be perplexing. He never travels. In fact, he has been out of the country only once, and then he went to the remote Scottish isles—the Orkneys, the Shetlands, and the Outer Hebrides. Nowadays, even the thought of a trip to New York fills him with dread. He has complained at times of feeling "unreal," and his friend Consuelo Joerns, a writer and artist who has known him since 1938, recalls, "He said to me once that he hates to travel, because when he's between places he's nowhere." Although he's a regular customer at a rustic cafeteria-style restaurant near his home called Jack's Outback, he admits that he doesn't even visit friends. "It sounds sort of snotty, but I feel I'm much better off if people come to me than me go to them. We all have periods where we're shining very brightly and people are calling us up and wanting us to do things and so forth, and then somehow the phases of the moon change and



"Black holes, quasars, galactic storms, and now those damn space signals from Earth."

LAST-MINUTE CAMPAIGN STOP

we're hardly visible at all and the phone doesn't ring for days. I just go along with that. I wait for the phone to ring, usually."

Gorey refused to attend the New York opening of "Dracula" (he thought the production a bit of a "hodgepodge"); he also refused to attend the Tony-presentation ceremony that year, at which he won the award for best costume design. Is he immune to the lure of fame? "I really don't think I was ever terribly ambitious. And the more I go along, the more I think how awful it would be to be rich and famous. I'd love to be rich, but being famous—I think if you ever give any thought to it, then you say, 'Well, you know, I'm not famous *enough*. Why don't I have a one-man show at the Metropolitan Museum?' And this way you drive yourself absolutely crackers. So I try not to think about it. I occasionally have my fantasies of worldwide fame, you know, but they're totally absurd. More and more, I think you should have no expectations and do everything for its own sake. That way, you won't be hit in the head quite so frequently. I firmly believe what someone said—that life is what happens when you're making other plans."

If Gorey seems to be striving to confine himself to the margins of American culture, his books look less marginal all the time—especially in a society increasingly devoted to pastiche and appropriation. "God knows my influences are eclectic," he says. "There's hardly anything I haven't filched from at some time or another. Silent films, especially serials—I really do believe that movies got worse once they started to talk. Japanese literature, because I think I've read everything that's available in translation up until about 1900, and they do have that tradition that I love of leaving things out. The big, long nineteenth-century novel with a cast of thousands. And then nineteenth-century book illustration. I was very much taken with that, in the same way that I presume Max Ernst was. I mean, all those things that Ernst used in his collages *can't* have looked that sinister to people in the nineteenth century who were just leafing through ladies' magazines and catalogues. And, of course, now they look nothing *but* sinister, no matter what. Even the most innocuous Christmas annual is filled with the most lugubrious, sinister engravings."

Gorey's chosen form is a kind of subversive imitation of the children's book; his albums intentionally evoke the remembered comforts of childhood reading. There isn't much text in them, for instance, and what there is is terse and seemingly straightforward. Sometimes it takes the shape of an alphabet; sometimes it rhymes. The drawings have the nostalgic feel of nineteenth-century engravings; their vibrant density is reminiscent of Tenniel or Gustave Doré, or even of a Currier & Ives holiday card. And the world they depict is like something out of "The Secret Garden": vaguely Victorian or Edwardian, and chockablock with swirling wallpaper, jittery carpets, ponderous draperies, tea sets, balustrades, urns. It's a flat, two-dimensional universe, and one of Gorey's central jokes is the game he plays with turn-of-the-century art history, recapitulating the way Cézanne and Matisse disrupted perspective to bring color and pattern to the fore. Except that Gorey's world is usually colorless—and often crosshatched to the point of mania. Pattern competes with pattern, rugs battle wall panels, and the characters themselves become clashing design elements, featureless bubbleheads floating atop vast swatches of herringbone and fustian and fur. Gorey's people wear things that nobody wears anymore—curly waxed mustaches, plus-fours, feathers that erupt from the crowns of their heads. Their faces are sometimes wildly stylized and sometimes not, but they are almost always disturbingly blank.

A Gorey book feels like a whimsy for children, but it doesn't develop that way. Several pages in, or sometimes immediately, ghastly things start happening. Young Millicent Frastley is abducted and sacrificed to The Insect God. Maudie Splaytoe, the prima ballerina known to her public as Mirella Splatova, is lost over the Camargue when "a great dark bird" flies into the propeller of her airplane. Poor Charlotte Sophia, the heroine of "The Hapless Child," is run over by her own father, who then fails to recognize her. And in Gorey's most celebrated alphabet, "The Gashlycrumb Tinies," a tyke perishes with every passing letter:

A is for Amy who fell down the stairs
B is for Basil assaulted by bears . . .
K is for Kate who was struck with an axe
L is for Leo who swallowed some tacks
M is for Maud who was swept out to sea
N is for Neville who died of ennui . . .

Gorey's horrors are related in a kind of cultivated deadpan, as though the narrator, still enjoying his fireside brandy, hadn't quite grasped the gravity of the situation. Strange creatures, often little newtlike things, appear, undetected, in corners. And the drawings correspond oddly to the words: sometimes they, too, seem oblivious of what's going on. If the reader thought he was embarking on a sugary pipe dream, the scales will by now have fallen from his eyes. Reading Gorey is like losing your innocence—except that, as the creepiness mounts, something else takes over. His victims are too vacuous to inspire pity and terror, and his tone is too cool to make you wring your hands. The only recourse is to laugh, and you do. In some of Gorey's finest stories, a kind of nameless angst gradually descends: you watch a whole life pass by with woefully little incident, or you watch a house invaded by an ineffable presence, almost without repercussion. For Gorey, existential dread isn't the subtext, it's the punch line. The books are as appallingly funny as if they were parody, but they're not parody, exactly, because in some way they also seem absolutely true; their chill is authentic. As Gorey has said, only half in jest, "I write about everyday life."

He hates to think of his work as "macabre," because he never lingers on the violence; in fact, he invests it with no emotion at all. People—often tiny people—are dispatched, and life goes on. (When I ask him why so many of his victims are children, Gorey replies, "It's just so obvious. They're the easiest targets.") In a very beautiful, underrated 1962 book called "The Willowdale Handcar" Gorey offers a subtle yet magisterial view of the human condition, following three of his typical nondescript turn-of-the-century characters on a handcar voyage through America. Along the way, they pass people and places with wonderfully Goreyesque names: Mr. Queevil in Bogus Corners, Nellie Flim somewhere between West Elbow and Penetralia, and Mrs. Umlaut, who is mentioned during a baked-bean supper at the Halfbath Methodist Church, near Hiccupboro. "The Willowdale Handcar" is a kind of denatured American picaresque; it's like "Huckleberry Finn" or "On the Road" or "They Live by Night," except that the characters aren't rogues or rebels, they're the usual Gorey ciphers, hurtling through time. Poker-faced, they traverse a landscape that's like something out of D. W. Griffith, and obscure disasters take place around them—some momentarily arresting, some only dimly perceived, all without much consequence. An air of almost metaphysical mystery surrounds this journey, just as it surrounds so many of Gorey's journeys; in the end, the three companions disappear into a tunnel and fail to come out the other side. Gorey's world is the world depicted in Brueghel's great painting "The Fall of Icarus," in which a plowman and a crew of seamen go about their business while the mythical flier splashes into the sea next to them almost unnoticed. "If anything, I'm Taoist," he says. "You know, the Way. Go with the flow. Keep in tune with it all."

THE ANTHILL

Sand pyramid, size of a child, each September
it was moved thirty feet back from the veranda's
longest shadow, which stopped in its daily

violet slope near the withering yew. Moved gently,
with a wide flat shovel. From the kitchen,
the wrecked hill was a slag heap, its mussel

color germinating in rain to brown, to velvet, to mica,
so that after a time a reflection shone from it
and scattered, and, each June, Mother said aloud

that it seemed the house had moved closer to the hill,
even though the hill was long moved back.
For the little girls who watched, who heard,

each tremble-leg was a signal in their own patois,
a wave goodbye, the whole a black bead curtain
like the one at Mrs. Hennessey's, where sometimes,

of an afternoon, they were left—her doorway with its
there, not there, its speechless partings, the
dark italic hedge too small to read. A decade

of exile: of school, of being sent to bed, of being
told to put the book down, as every year the ants
were wrenched from their own tenacious fondness

for the veranda pilings, for the black blossoms of old tires
that clung to them like clematis until—a moving
picture of transit—the ants crossed over again

for their mysterious attendance on the flagstones,
the hill again grown pointed, night-colored, earth
turned to mirror-water, a satellite by

the fence post that was flattened, excavated, removed.
And then the white house was a flipped coin,
by and by deserted, its face showing not

the sun but the moon, and the girls who had drawn with a stick
under the yew and learned their letters now
stood under its cracked limbs to bicker, to

divide the world between them, to say what Mother
said, to speak too subtly, about the anthill now
taller than the pilings, the veranda

turned violet as its shadow.

—CYNTHIA ZARIN

Gorey is miserable discussing his work. His eyes dart. Gradually, he withdraws into a silence punctuated by "tsk"s and groans. The darkness, the sadism, the bloodshed—questions about these things disturb him the most. He feels misunderstood. His books aren't in the gothic tradition, he insists; he's not telling horror stories; he's not out to scare. What he's up to has more to do with nonsense, with Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear (whose poems he has spectacularly illustrated). "Nonsense really demands precision," he says. "Like in 'The Jumblies': 'Their heads are green, and their hands are blue, And they went to sea in a sieve.' Which is all quite concrete, goofy as it is." Well, yes. But no fate more dire than a meal of Stilton cheese ever befalls the Jumblies. Contrast that with the phlegmatic Gorey limerick that runs:

Little Zooks, of whom no one was fond,
They shot towards the roof and beyond;
The infant's trajectory passed him over
 the rectory,
And into a lily-choked pond.

Gorey shifts uneasily in his chair. "O.K.," he says. "Well, I think I'm much more optimistic than I am pessimistic. But every now and then I do think life is a crock, there's no getting around it. Basically, it's really just *awful*. I do think it's stupidity that makes the world go round. And if you're doing nonsense it *has* to be rather awful, because there'd be no point. I'm trying to think if there's sunny nonsense. Sunny, funny nonsense for children—oh, how boring, boring, boring. As Schubert said, there is no happy music. And that's true, there really isn't. And there's probably no happy nonsense, either."

An orangey-brown cat slinks up Gorey's arm and onto his shoulders, where it stretches for a moment before draping itself athwart him like a stole. "Dear! What are you *do*ing?" he says, but he doesn't really seem to mind. Gorey tolerates a wide range of feline behavior—and that is just as well, since he keeps seven cats, only three of which ever appear for company. "The cats abuse him," his old friend Consuelo Joerns says. "The thing that horrifies me is that they'll spill his jar of India ink all over a drawing he's been working on for a week, and he won't do anything, he'll just— Well, he really is a Taoist. He has a tendency to let things be. The only time he ever interferes is when he's rescuing stray cats. And I think he also picks up worms off the sidewalk, so they don't get stepped on."

"Most people who have cats would not put up with what I put up with from my cats," Gorey says, reaching back with one gangly arm to give his purring stole a stroke. "You know—clawed furniture, cats who pee all over the place, and everything. But I feel it's their house as much as mine. What I do like about them is since they don't talk, that's sort of a plus. And they really are very mysterious. It's impossible to know what's going on in their tiny noggins. It's very interesting sharing a house with a group of people who obviously see things, hear things, think about things in a vastly different way."

GOREY has rarely shared a house with anybody else. Since leaving college, in 1950, he has cultivated the life of a vestal, the anchoritic handmaiden of his art, summering with cousins when they visited Cape Cod but otherwise living alone. He has said that he is "reasonably undersexed," a condition for which he seems somewhat grateful, but now I ask him whether he has ever been in love, and his eyes, which are never easy to read, momentarily narrow. "Oh, moot question," he says. "I thought I was in love a couple of times, but I rather think it was only infatuation. It bothered me briefly, but I always got over it. I mean, for a while I'd think, after some perfectly pointless involvement that was far more trouble than it was worth—I'd think, Oh God, I hope I don't get infatuated with anybody ever again. And it's been sixteen, seventeen years, so I think I'm safe. I realized I was accident-prone in that direction anyway, so the hell with it. Cats have the same sort of nuisance value, so to speak. They occupy one."

BOWLING
OPEN 24 HOURS
24 HOURS
BOWLING
50 LANES

The house is somewhat redolent of Gorey's companions, but that is the least of its peculiarities. He walks me through it in a rather gingerly fashion, wary of a newcomer's reaction. The place is big—with cavernous rooms—and sits prominently on a typical New England village green. All around it are bright-white houses with acres of buzz-cut lawn. But Gorey's house looks like something out of "Grey Gardens"—the paint reduced to a kind of dandruff, the grounds fully capable of harboring anacondas and rare medicines. Out front sits his morose-looking Volkswagen Rabbit, with the license plate that reads "Ogdred"; it's one of his pseudonyms, almost all of which are anagrams of his name: Ogdred Weary, Dogear Wryde, D. Awdrey-Gore, E. G. Deadworry, Drew Dogyear, and so forth. On the crumbling porch is a bench, but no one can sit on the bench, because it's lined with rocks. There are also rocks, arranged in various Zen ways, in the living room and the front room. Next to the kitchen sink are two bowls full, and these rocks are covered with water, and the water is covered with algae. "Don't worry," he says. "I'm not making them into fettucine or anything. But I do like rocks. I had a terrible trauma this week: I didn't know what had become of my favorite rock. And I thought, Oh my God, I can't live. Fortunately, it was found."

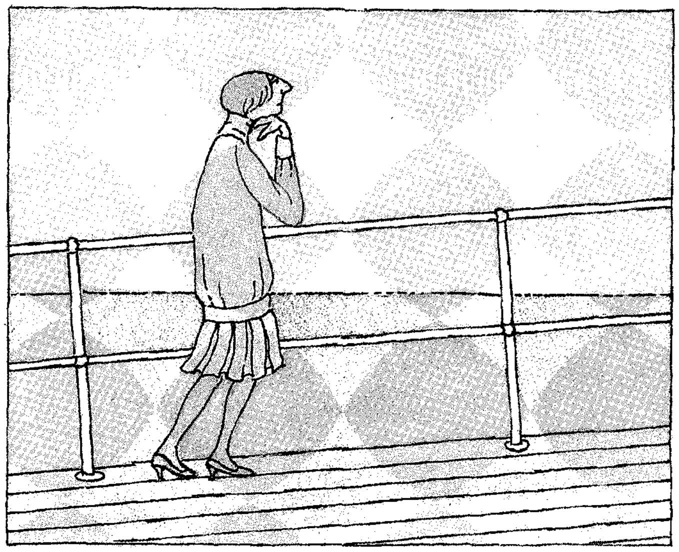
The house was built around 1800, and it's clear that once upon a time Gorey began to fix it up. There are lots of bookshelves, and a few walls with fairly fresh paint on them; there are fine wood floors, and here and there, if you can catch a glimpse of them, lovely antique tables and mirrors and chests. But almost all the best pieces have long since been buried under thousands of dusty books—mostly the kind you'd find in a secondhand bookstore—and, if not books, then videotapes and CDs and cassettes, and, if not those things, well . . . other things. Finials, for instance. In the vast living room, there are finials of every size and sort—huge freestanding ones and little delicate ones—some on shelves, some just sitting out on the floor. There are lobster floats and other vaguely nautical whatsits stacked against walls and tucked behind loom-

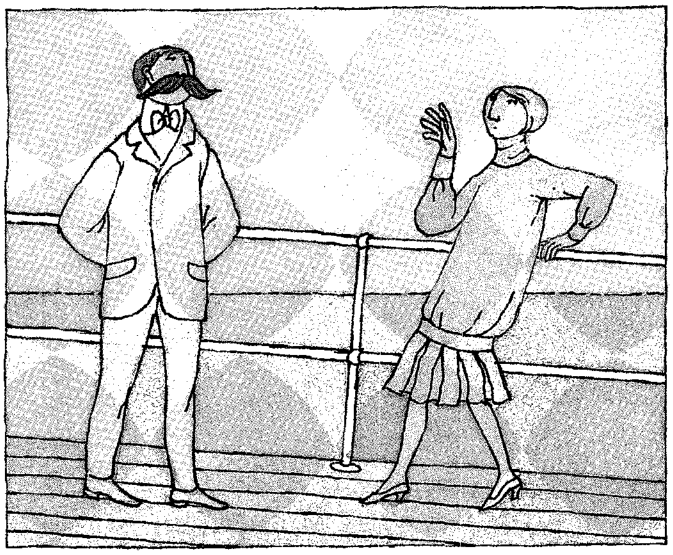
SERIOUS LIFE:

A CRUISE

by Edward Gorey

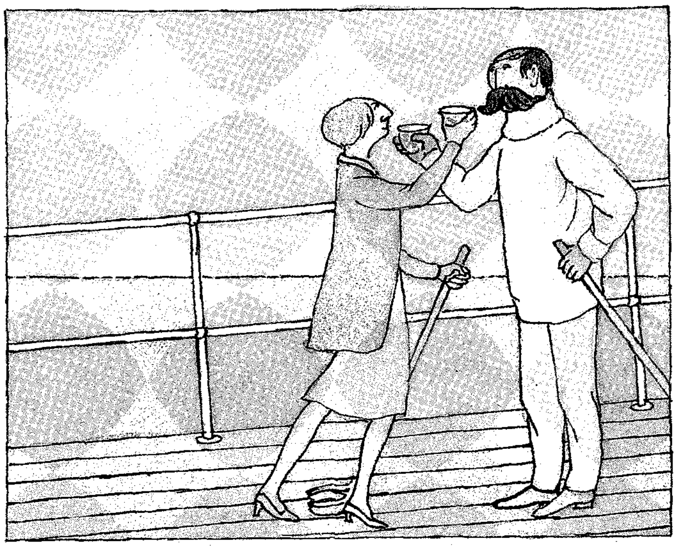
Lettice was finding the cruise she was on something of a bore.

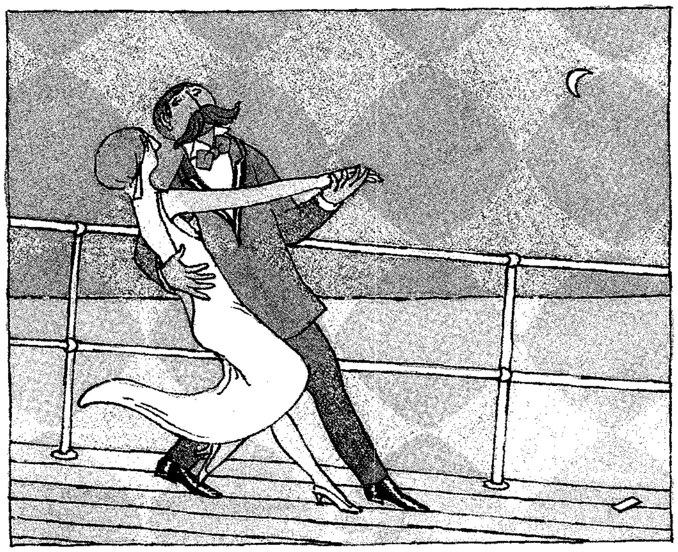




Then she met the Honorable Hereward Lyke-Wake and became enraptured by the splendor of his mustache.

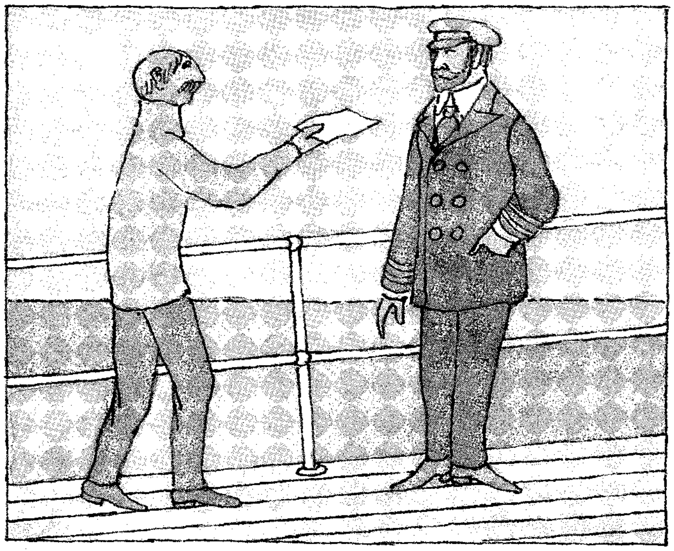
By day, they played shuffleboard and drank cups of bouillon.

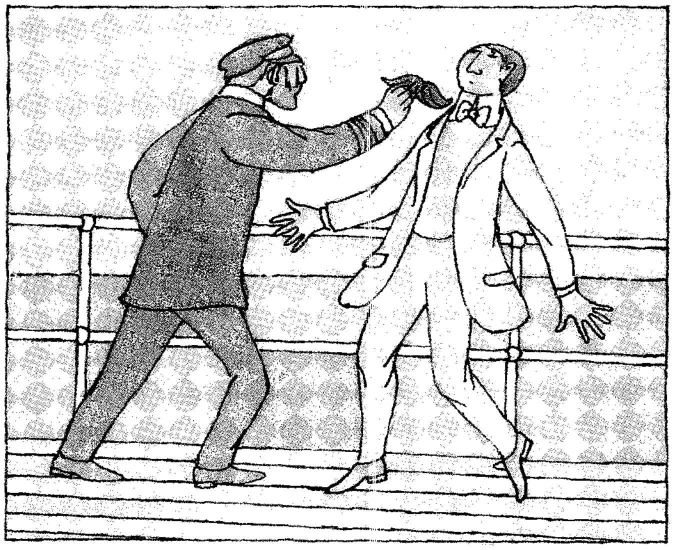




Far into the night they danced the tango.

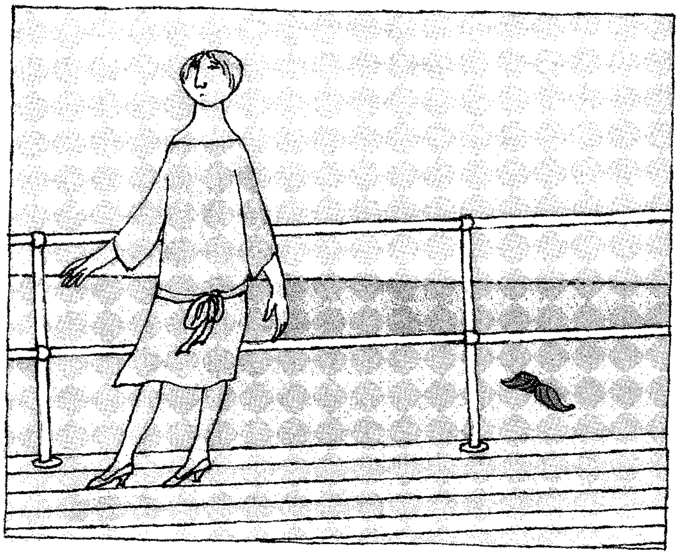
The wireless revealed that Hereward was really Harold Foop, wanted for looting poor boxes outside Liverpool.

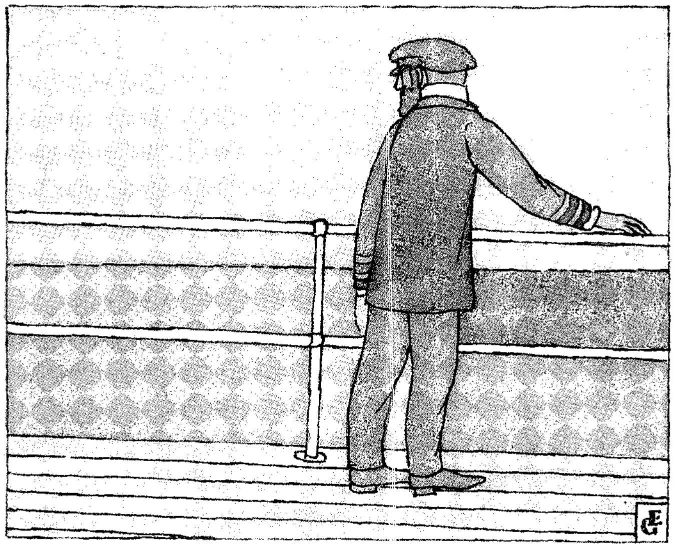




Everything about him was utterly false, including his mustache.

Lettice seemed scarcely to notice when he was hauled below to the brig.





So everyone was rather surprised when she threw herself over the railing.

ing, cat-clawed sofas. By a fireplace stands a perfect old toilet, and on the floor, half concealed under a table, lies an enormous tusk. The ceiling bears a number of deep wounds, mostly patched with cardboard, and a vine is growing through one of the walls; Gorey says he once determined to go out and cut it down, but he could never find where it began.

"The house has a somewhat, um, distressed look," I offer.

"Oh, well, yes," he says. "It really does need an awful lot of work, and if I got a large sum of money I would have it all fixed up—though I'm not sure I would have much of the inside fixed up more than it is. I rather like decay. I'm a little reluctant to take out a mortgage. Being free-lance, you never know."

Gorey's is clearly the sensibility of a collector—or maybe "amasser" would be a better word. He wants to buy every book he sees, wants to see every movie that plays (he even goes to sequels of "Friday the 13th" and "Nightmare on Elm Street"), wants to watch every episode of his favorite TV shows. When I ask him what he gets out of all this cultural consumption, he says, "I don't know. It keeps real life at bay, I suppose. Every now and again, I think, If I don't go and see this, how will I know? But then I do go and see it and I already *did* know, exactly."

"He has a certain kind of addictive personality, and it expresses itself in every way," his friend Charles France, the former American Ballet Theatre executive, says. "It's intriguingly compulsive behavior. It's like all that crosshatching in his drawings. There he goes for thirty years, crosshatching—he can't stop doing it."

FALL BACK

On a day like this, when I have no paper
and look for scraps, the sun sets early.
It's black at five. My grandmother, too, surely
had days like this, even when she was young.
She was a bitter woman.

I've been to the market, some days before
a day like this, and bought food,
bought fruit. I make sure to buy, too, some
one thing I haven't seen in an age.
Today, in October, it's sumac.

They don't wear gloves nowadays
to go downtown. No change in dress,
I think, on a day like this, could change
my uninherited nature: I chose this. I know
how I look in pictures.

In summer it would be light now.
The slit courtyards allowing the light,
I'd have a hardened field of sky, trampled
by clouds. Even on a day like this,
I'd have my small certainty.

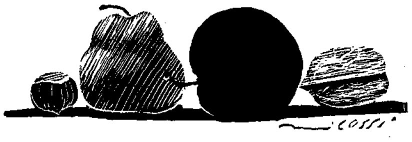
I'm not hungry or thirsty today. I can read
long words from far away, in place and time,
and understand them; turn on a light
when it's five. My grandmother often had
days like this, but she was a bitter woman.

—Elizabeth Macklin

GOREY began drawing, he says, when he was one and a half—"little sausagy things that were supposed to be trains." That was back in Chicago, where he was born, in 1925. His father was a newspaper reporter who later dabbled in politics and publicity; his mother, a beauty, worked as a government clerk. Edward, known then and now as Ted, was an only child, and precocious: he taught himself to read at the age of three. "Nobody knows how," he says. "I find it absolutely baffling." He saw very little of his father when he was young, but his mother was of the smothering variety. "We were far closer than I really wished most of the time, and we fought a good deal right up until the time she died, at the age of eighty-six," he says. "She was a very strong-minded lady." Gorey remembers his childhood as happy and normal, but there was one wrenching element. "We moved around a lot—I've never understood why. We moved around Rogers Park in Chicago, from one street to another, about every year." By the time he finished the eighth grade (he skipped the first and the fifth), he had attended five different schools.

Then, when he was eleven, his parents divorced (apparently amicably; they remarried sixteen years later). Ted went off to the progressive Francis W. Parker high school, and there found himself a star among stars. "He was considered brilliant and funny," says Consuelo Joerns, who dated him in those days. "And there was something *futuristic* about him. He was two steps ahead of the rest of us. Once, he painted his toenails green and walked barefoot down Michigan Avenue, which was really shocking in those days."

Gorey spent a semester after high school at the Art Institute of Chicago, but in 1943 he was drafted into the Army and assigned to be a company clerk at the Dugway Proving Ground, near Salt Lake City. "They tested mortars and poison gas," he says. "Whenever you read that somewhere in the Western states twenty thousand sheep have expired for some mysterious reason, it's always the Dugway Proving Ground." Accepted by Har-



vard before he was drafted, Gorey enrolled after his discharge, in 1946, and majored in French. His roommate was Frank O'Hara, later the most celebrated poet of the New York School. At an exhibition of Gorey drawings at Cambridge's Mandrake Book Store, O'Hara met the future poet John Ashbery, and soon a gang formed that would eventually include Alison Lurie, Kenneth Koch, Donald Hall, and the poet-actress-playwright who became their den mother and sacred monster—the late V. R. (Bunny) Lang. With Lang and O'Hara (and a host of other poets, including Lyon Phelps, Richard Eberhart, and Richard Wilbur), Gorey was a founding member of the Poets' Theatre, an ill-attended but nevertheless influential forerunner of New York's Artists' Theatre. It opened in 1951 (a year after Gorey's graduation); one of its first productions was "Try, Try," a play by O'Hara. The sets were by Gorey; the stars were Ashbery and Lang.

Gorey's prodigal consumption of culture had already begun. While Harvard was teaching the staid classics, Gorey and his compatriots were exploring French Surrealism, Japanese Kabuki and Noh, Hollywood "guilty pleasures," and, above all, the perfumed, semi-satirical fictions of English novelists like Ronald Firbank, Evelyn Waugh, Ivy Compton-Burnett, C. Day-Lewis, and Henry Green. "They were a counterculture, an early and élitist form of it," says the writer Brad Gooch, whose biography of Frank O'Hara, "City Poet," is to be published next year. "Before he met Gorey, O'Hara was a pretty earnest kid, but Gorey had this nonsensical style that came from his Anglophilia, from the English books he read. So that kind of 'Brideshead Revisited' sensibility was what Gorey conveyed to O'Hara. They were inventing this alternative culture, and you always had to choose something that wasn't accepted by the mainstream. Gorey was a big Ivy Compton-Burnett fan, whereas O'Hara was more inclined to C. Day-Lewis. And O'Hara liked Rimbaud, and Bunny Lang preferred Auden. So there were these little tiny distinctions that meant everything. And this attitude has stuck with all of them."

"I love it when you use your 'All Things Considered' voice."

• •

You can see it still in Gorey's work. The solemn and isolated Victorian households in which terrible deeds unfold seem to bear the stamp of Ivy Compton-Burnett (who wrote about little else); the wry yet convoluted Briticisms remind one of Firbank's sublime nonsense; the peculiar austerity of some of Gorey's drawings, in which he sacrifices his insistent wood grains and wallpapers to floods of white space, owes a lot to the Japanese art and literature he loves. There is also a marked strain of French Surrealism in his work. Edmund Wilson detected it in 1959, in a *New Yorker* piece, which was the first important critical notice Gorey received. Wilson was referring to Gorey's fourth album, "The Object-Lesson," a series of dreamlike non sequiturs:

> On the shore a bat, or possibly an umbrella,
> disengaged itself from the shrubbery,
> causing those nearby to recollect the miseries of childhood.
> It now became apparent (despite the lack of library paste)
> that something had happened to the vicar;
> guns began to go off in the distance.

Lines like those are reminiscent of such avant-garde techniques as the "cut up," whereby William Burroughs and Brion Gysin created bizarre nonsense sentences by scissoring newspaper strips and rearranging them randomly. The Surrealists had done something similar with their *cadavre-exquis* experiments, in which someone would write a phrase on a sheet of paper, fold it over to hide part of it, and pass it on to the next person, who would in turn concoct the next piece of the phrase, and so forth. (They made visual *cadavres*, too.) Clifford Ross has pointed out the *cadavre-exquis* quality of some of Gorey's work, but Gorey is tied more closely to meaning than his predecessors were. He finds a meeting ground between the Surrealists and the Japanese, who allow silence to create meaning by letting the reader fill in what's left out. Gorey's books demand participation.

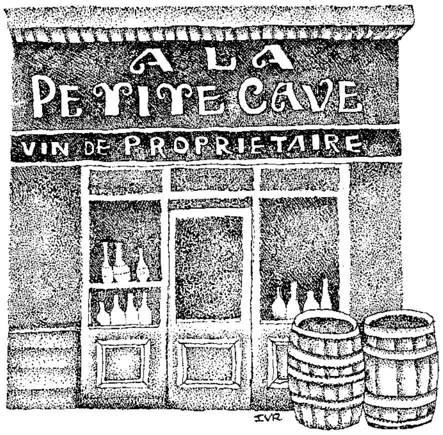
"I'm beginning to feel that if you create something you're killing a lot of other things," Gorey says. "And the way I write, since I do leave out most of the connections, and very little is pinned down, I feel that I'm doing a minimum of damage to other possibilities that might arise in a reader's mind. The authors I dislike the most or find unreadable are the ones who are forcing a personality on me that I don't really care very much for in the first place. And they also tend to be the writers who are completely exhaustive about whatever it is they're writing about until you're just left feeling 'O.K., you've nailed me to the chair, that's it, there's nothing left to think about, there's nothing to question.' I think my least favorite writers in the world— Thomas Mann is high on the list. I dutifully read 'The Magic Mountain' and felt as if I had t.b. for a year afterward. But my least favorite author in all the world—how *could* I have forgotten? Henry James. I hate Henry James more than tongue can tell. I have read everything he wrote, sometimes more than once. I think he's the worst writer in the English language. Those endless sentences. I always pick up Henry James and I think, *Oooh!* This is *won*derful! And then presently I will hear a little sound. And it's the plug being pulled. And the whole thing is going down the drain like the bathwater."

Gorey retains most of the tastes he exhibited at Harvard, though his range and knowledge—especially of movies and ballet—expanded when he moved to New York, in 1953. Through a Radcliffe friend, Barbara Zimmerman, he met the editor and publisher Jason Epstein, her future husband; Epstein was launching a new division of Doubleday called Anchor Books, publishing out-of-print classics in a format that would come to be known as the trade paperback. Gorey wound up drawing most of the jackets. "They were beautiful, ravishing," recalls Barbara Epstein, now the co-editor of *The New York Review of Books*. "He worked very slowly, with a tremendous perfectionism, and he would never let a drawing out of his hands if it was less than perfect." Seven years later, Gorey joined Jason Epstein in starting the Looking Glass Library, an Anchor-style division of Random House that published classics of children's literature in hard cover. After Looking Glass dissolved, Gorey spent an unhappy year at Bobbs Merrill, and by the time he lost that job, amid some internecine turmoil, in 1963, he was ready to give up the workaday world for good. "I had so much free-lance work—book covers, and so forth and so on—that I didn't really have time to look for another job," he says. Besides, he wanted to devote more time to his own books.

By now, he has published some eighty of them, and he has notebooks full of stories and poems that he hasn't got around to illustrating yet. He still takes on illustration jobs, and he has also begun to stage small theatrical productions of his own on Cape Cod, adapting them himself from his published and unpublished work, and directing his own gaggle of amateur actors in them. On the whole, despite his solitude, he seems quite content, just as he always has. Which makes the darkness and terror in his work all the more puzzling.

I decide to ask him about it once more, and this time, in his meandering way, he gives me something like an answer.

"You know, Jane Austen, at the end of 'Mansfield Park,' said that famous thing 'Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can.' Well, if you really analyze that, it doesn't mean that she has *not* been writing about guilt and misery. She's written about it only to the extent that it's absolutely necessary to get it across. And as soon as she's got it across she's just not going to wallow in it. I mean, my favorite genre is the sinister-slash-cozy. I think there should be a little bit of uneasiness in everything, because I do think we're all really in a sense living on the edge. So much of life is inexplicable. Inexplicable things happen to me, things that are so inexplicable that I'm not even sure that something happened. And you suddenly think, Well, if that could happen, anything could happen. One moment, something is there, and then, the next, it is not there. One minute, both of my feet are perfectly all right, and then, a minute later, somebody has dropped a fifty-pound weight on one of them, and now suddenly I've got an injured foot, and I have to go do something about this injured-foot thing. The things that happen to you are usually the things that you haven't thought of or that come absolutely out of nowhere. And all you can do is cope with them when they turn up."



This last may be the principle on which he has based his life as well as his art. The world is uncertain, beyond control; it leaks and lurches, and only a panoply of compulsions and stylizations can begin to combat the disorder. When I ask him about the obsessive cross-hatching in his work, he replies, "It's partly insecurity. I mean, where do you leave off? Where do you allow the white space to intervene?" Gorey has invented a life for himself in which it almost never does.

But that life seems to have fed him. "Oh dear," he says. "There are so many things we're brought up to believe that it takes you an awfully long time to realize that they aren't you." Suddenly, his voice goes bossy and falsetto, as though he were imitating some all-purpose Midwestern schoolmarm. "Why don't you travel? Why don't you get a master's degree in . . . something? Why don't you try doing this, that, or the other? Well, you're probably not doing it because it's not right. Why worry about it? God knows, there's enough to worry about without worrying about worrying about things."

He toys with the cat's tail. "You know, Ted Shawn, the choreographer—he used to say, 'When in doubt, twirl.' Oh, I do think that's such a great line." ♦

NO COMMENT DEPARTMENT

[*From the summer, 1992, issue of Printer's Ink, newsletter of a book-production company in Dexter, Mich.*]

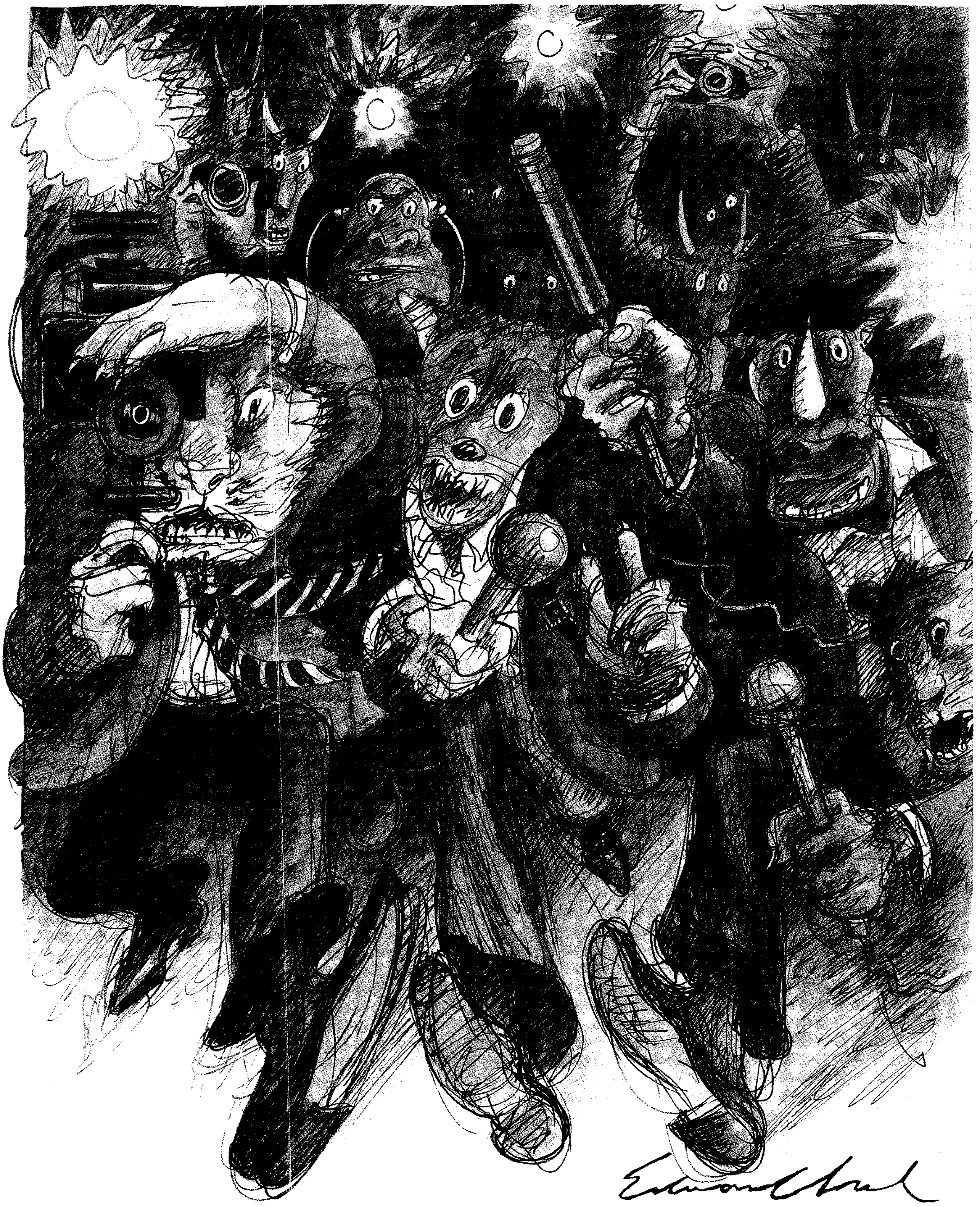
Either we are having some editors read Printer's Ink or we have some production people who were English majors. It was pointed out to me that in the last issue we mistakenly used "effect" (a noun) when we should have used "affect" (a verb). Also pointed out were 17 mistakes on commas, 2 with semi colons and a couple others that I don't recall. For this issue I am going to personally proof read this thing to guarantee that no mistakes occur. —*Page 2.*

If you intend to run a company by participative management then people have to participate. If a decision or change is going to effect you then you should have the opportunity to state your views. It's actually your duty. —*Page 3.*

ARTIST AT LARGE

MEDIA FEEDING FRENZY: NOVEMBER 4, 1992

by Edward Sorel



REPORT FROM MEXICO

SERENADING THE FUTURE

by Alma Guillermoprieto

MEXICANS know that a party has been outstandingly successful if at the end of it there are at least a couple of clusters of longtime or first-time acquaintances leaning on each other against a wall, sobbing helplessly. The activities one normally associates with a party—flirting and conversation, and even the kind of dancing that leads to an amnesiac dawn in a strange bed—are considered here mere preludes to or distractions from the ultimate goal, which is weeping and the free, luxurious expression of pain. A true celebrant of the Mexican fiesta will typically progress along a path that leads from compulsive joke-telling to stubborn argumentativeness to thick-tongued foolery, all in pursuit of a final, unchecked, absolving wash of tears, and a casual observer of this voluptuous ritual might conclude that the essential Mexican *fin de fiesta* cannot happen without alcohol. Not so. It cannot happen without *ranchera* music. People may cry admirably with little help from booze, but a drunk who begins to whimper without the benefit of song produces only mediocre tears. He cries out of self-pity. The man or woman who, with a few tequilas packed away, bursts into tears to the strains of a *ranchera* hymn—"Let My Bed Be Made of Stone," for example—weeps for the tragedy of the world, for a mother, for a father, for our doomed quests for happiness and love, for life. Sorrow on such a magnificent scale is in itself redeeming, and—an added benefit—its glory leaves little room for embarrassment the morning after.

Now that Mexico is carpeted with Kentucky Fried Chicken, Denny's, and McDonald's outlets, and Coca-Cola is the national drink; now that even low-paid office workers are indentured to their credit cards and auto loans; now that the government of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari has approved a North American Free Trade Agreement, which promises to make Mexico commercially one with its neighbors to the north, there is little scope for magnificent sorrow in the average citizen's life. In the smog-darkened center of Mexico City, or in its monstrous, ticky-tacky suburban spokes, the average citizen on an average day is more concerned with beating the traffic, making the mortgage payment, punching the clock. Progress has hit Mexico in the form of devastation, some of it ecological, much of it aesthetic. Life is rushed, the water may be poisoned, and the new industrial tortillas taste terrible. Favorite ornaments for the home include porcelain dogs and plastic roses, and for the two-thirds of the population which is confined to the cities recreation usually takes the form of a couple of hours with the latest imported sitcom or the local *telenovelas*. Hardly anyone knows anymore what it is to live on a ranch or to die of passion, and yet, when it comes to the defining moments of *mexicanidad*, *ranchera* music, with its odes to love, idyllic landscapes, and death for the sake of honor, continues to reign supreme.

It is a hybrid music. Sung most often to the accompaniment of a mariachi ensemble, *rancheras* generate tension by setting the classic formality of the trumpets and violins against the howling quality of the vocals. The lyrics of many of the best-known songs—"Cielito Lindo," say—include verses that were inherited in colonial days from Spain. Many of the rhetorical flourishes—"lips like rose petals," "eyes like stars"—are Spanish also. But when *rancheras* turn, as they do obsessively, to the topics of death and destruction, alcohol and defeat, and the singer holds up his dying heart for all to see, or calls for the stones in the field to shout at him, he is bleeding from a wound that is uniquely Mexican.

The spiritual home of *ranchera* music is in the heart of Mexico City—in a raucous plaza surrounded by ratty night clubs and forbidding ancient churches. The plaza, which is not far from where I grew up, is named after Giuseppe Garibaldi, the nineteenth-century Italian revolutionary, but the central statue is of José Alfredo Jiménez (1926-1973), who wrote more songs about weeping, alcohol, and women than any other *ranchera* composer. José Alfredo's statue is wearing mariachi costume, because that is what he wore when he sang, and because the plaza is home to dozens, if not hundreds, of men who are themselves mariachis, and who stroll the plaza at all hours of the day and night, singing José Alfredo's songs and those of other *ranchera* composers to anyone who pays to listen.

On three of the plaza's irregular sides are vast cantinas and a food market, where vats of highly seasoned soup are sold throughout the night to ward off or cure hangovers. At the plaza's dissonant center is a constantly moving swarm of blurry-eyed revellers and costumed mariachis. The people in mufti stroll, wail at the moon, stagger into each other's arms, or gather around a group of musicians and sing along with them, striking defiant poses as they belt out the words. The mariachis tag after potential customers and negotiate prices, play checkers with bottle tops, shiver in the midnight cold, and, thirty or forty times an evening, play their hearts out for the revellers. Here and there, an electric-shock vender wanders through the crowd, offering a brightly painted box of programmable current to those who, for the equivalent of a couple of dollars, want to take hold of a pair of wires and test their endurance of electricity. A gaggle of tall, goofy-looking foreigners applauds and smiles at the mariachis who have just finished playing for them, and the mariachis smile, too, because tourists pay well. The people at Stand P-84, a wholesale outlet for guavas and mangoes from the city's gigantic central produce market, think the tourists are pretty funny.

Chuy Soto and his guava-selling colleagues arrived here around eight o'clock on this particular drizzly evening and now, five hours later, they have reached the euphoric, sputtering stage at which the spirit invariably moves a Mexican to reach for extravagant metaphors and sing the glories of his country. There is a little pile of plastic glasses and empty bottles to mark the site where Chuy's group has been standing all this time, and the singer for the mariachi ensemble that has been accompanying them has just about lost his voice, but Chuy and his friends are full of vigor. "We come here to sing, and after a while emotions come out of us, and Mexicanness," Chuy says, blinking and pursing his lips as he struggles to focus. An adolescent tugs at my elbow, teary-eyed and anxious to share his own thoughts, but he can't get out a single coherent phrase, and he vanishes. One of Chuy's warehouse partners is trying to dance with a plump young woman whose acquaintance he has just made, but he's holding on too tight, and she pushes him away. The woman's friend is singing along with the mariachi (the name refers both to the group and to its individual members), for perhaps the fifth time, a song called "Dos Almas" ("Two Souls"), but by now she can't get anyone to listen to her and she weaves off in a huff. The amiable Chuy is still explaining Mexicanness to my companion, who is Peruvian. "A Mexican's heart is always open and full of music," he stammers, but a buddy of his, who spouts profanity and has in general a sharper-edged vision of things, butts in. "A Mexican knows that life is worthless," he declares.

The mariachi singer Ismael Gutiérrez and his group charge twenty-five thousand pesos, or about eight dollars, per song, but they offered Chuy and his friends the wholesale rate after serenading them with thirty *rancheras*. This meant that for a lucky evening of solid work each of the members of the Mariachi Real del Potosí, as the group Gutiérrez belongs to is called, got about thirty dollars. The group is small, and not first-rate. There's only one of each of the essential components of a mariachi: a violin; a guitar; a trumpet; a *guitarrón*, or fat bass guitar; a *vihuela*, or small plinking guitar; and the singer—Gutiérrez. Like many of his fellow-musicians who have land or a family trade in the provinces, Gutiérrez comes to Mexico City every fortnight or so from his home state—San Luis Potosí, in his case—and puts up at one of the scarred buildings around the plaza, where, he says, the old-fashioned, high-ceilinged rooms are crowded with bunk beds stacked as many as five high. There, he makes sure he gets at least eight hours' sleep a day, to keep his voice going. That is also where he stores his costume, which is as essential to his occupation as any instrument.

In the old days, before the movies, mariachis used to dress like what they were: peasant musicians. But when the Mexican movie industry began producing musicals, back in the thirties, mariachis in Indian dress—big white shirts and trousers, and straw hats—came to seem too ordinary, and someone decided to outfit them in the elegant *mestizo* dress of the *charro*, or horseman. Its basic elements are a broad-brimmed felt hat, a short, fitted black jacket, and tight black trousers with double seams running down the outside of the leg. For show, *charros* decorated the seams with brass or silver fittings and with fancy embroidery. Mexico's Hollywood kept the ornaments and the embroidery and added color. The majority of Garibaldi's mariachis wear silver-trimmed black, but now they do this to signify that they are free-lancers, which means that if a customer approaches a *guitarrón* player, say, requesting a song, the musician has to pull an ensemble together from the other black-clad free-lancers standing around. Ismael Gutiérrez is a significant step up in the hierarchy: he belongs to a formally constituted group, and all the members of his Mariachi Real wear sober Prussian blue. Gutiérrez—stout, cheerful, courtly, and equipped with a remarkable handlebar mustache—looks reassuring in his outfit, like a character out of an old-time movie.

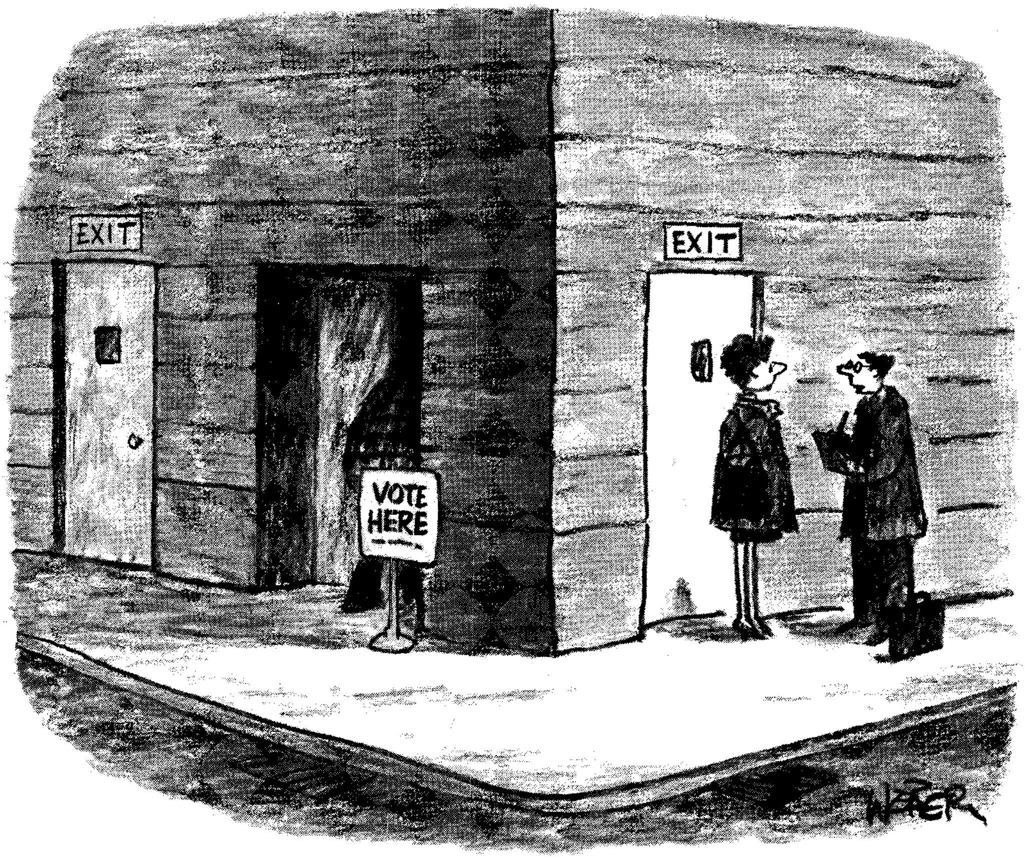
ANTHONY RUSSO

Because Gutiérrez belongs to an established mariachi, he has been able to weather a disaster that has affected Garibaldi since the beginning of the year: construction of a new subway line began then, shutting off the main access road to the plaza and cutting down the number of potential customers so drastically that on any given Friday night the ratio of mariachis to revellers appears to be almost one to one. Gutiérrez and his mates have discovered the advantages of business cards, and by handing them out (printed with a more prosperous relative's phone number) around local office buildings and to friendly customers, they have been able to make up for the loss of walk-by trade. Not so the free-lancer Jesús Rosas. Although he plays what his colleagues describe as "a very pretty trumpet," all he can do now is dream of joining a group or landing a permanent job with the mariachis who play inside one of the huge cantinas, such as the famous Tenampa, that face on the plaza. Rosas is only twenty-five, but he has been playing Garibaldi since he left home, more than a decade ago. He used to be in demand, because he plays well, knows a lot of songs, and has a particular affability, at once alert and courteous, friendly and firmly reserved, that is much prized by Mexicans. Now times are bad, but he is stubborn. While dozens of lesser mariachis are coping with the subway crisis by heading for the Reforma, a few blocks away, to flag down cars and hustle for customers, Rosas, who finds such a procedure completely undignified, remains in Garibaldi. "The plaza is here," he says, but that means that by noon on most days he is already cruising it, his trumpet protectively cradled in a beat-up vinyl carrying case, trying to make up in long hours for the clients he has lost.

Mexico's subway is a tremendous achievement: it is now one of the longest urban railroads in the world; it allows millions of people to crisscross the sprawling city to get to work on time every day; it did not collapse, or even buckle, during the earthquake that shattered much of the city seven years ago; it is clean; it runs smoothly. Its expansion has forced dozens of shop owners along the path of its construction into bankruptcy and brought the Garibaldi mariachis to the brink of despair, but if everything goes according to the official plan, once the station opens next spring Garibaldi will be overrun by *ranchera* devotees, and mariachi income will soar. Gutiérrez doesn't think this will happen, because people who can afford mariachis travel by car. Nevertheless, this is the kind of promise that Mexico's rulers are constantly making to their subjects these days: severe sacrifices are being asked, and times are hard, but the country is being modernized, and when modernity arrives it will bring great rewards.

“MODERNITY” is the buzzword, and, although hardly anyone knows how to define it, even the people in Garibaldi can recognize its presence in their lives. Modernity is what makes the mariachi Guadalupe González—a man who boasts that he beats his woman regularly, out of a traditional sense of duty (“She misses it if I don't,” he explains)—welcome the subway that Jesús Rosas dislikes. “*Hay que modernizarse*,” he admonishes Rosas, citing the contemporary imperative. Modernity is what makes Rosas look uncomfortable at the mention of wife-beating by his elders, and it is also what makes his young fellow-mariachis finish their *ranchera* practice and immediately tune in a rock station on the radio, to Rosas' distress. Modernity is the guiding impulse behind the latest gambit by the travel agencies, which consists of bringing tourists to Garibaldi by the busload to be serenaded by musicians permanently under agency contract, instead of letting the tourists wander about in time-honored fashion until they find a mariachi who strikes them as *simpático*. It used to be, Guadalupe González says, that first-rate mariachis like him could deliver the traditional *ranchera* serenade outside the window of a house where a party was going on, and then prove their versatility by playing boleros, polkas, and even cha-cha-chas for the partygoers to dance to. Now, thanks to modernity, mariachis deliver their serenade and are waved away, and the party continues to the sound of a rock band, a *cumbia* group, or, worst of all, one of those tootling electronic organs with programmable rhythms and sound effects. Modernity, as it is understood here, means speed and high productivity and the kind of cost analysis that leads to one electronic organ rather than half a dozen friendly but expensively thirsty mariachis. Now that a finished text of the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement has been initialled by the trade ministers of Canada, the United States, and Mexico, the arrival of full-scale modernity is assumed to be imminent. The terms of the treaty state that fifteen years after its final approval all tariffs and barriers to trade between the three countries will disappear. In effect, this means that the continent will become a single, gigantic market, and government officials are already trumpeting the estimated benefits: great tonic shots of foreign investment that will make the economy roar. Less powerful people worry that they, like the mariachis, will lose their jobs to electronic substitutes. But a more common undercurrent of worry and doubt, in the endless private jokes, offhand conversational references, editorial cartoons, and television chat-show allusions to the free-trade treaty, is more abstract, and strikes deeper. What people want to know about the coming onslaught of modernity is: How Mexican is it to be modern? Or, rather, since everything modern comes from a large, powerful country to the north, how Mexican is it to be like the United States?

There is nothing new about such fears of cultural takeover, of course: Mexico has been under invasion from the United States in one form or another since the war in 1847 that cost the country half its territory, and since then the arrival of each new fad or technological improvement has been used by pessimists to herald the death of Mexican tradition. Rosas' worry that the *ranchera* is a dying form is hardly original, but it is not paranoid. Rock-music stations *are* increasingly numerous. Mariachi serenades *are* far less frequent. This doesn't mean that Rosas' rock-humming contemporaries are less Mexican than he is; it simply means that their culture is more fragmented. The remarkable psychic sturdiness shared by the inhabitants of a city that often looks like the morning after the apocalypse may or may not owe something to cultural coherence, but, as every Latino teen-ager in Los Angeles knows, the combination of cultural

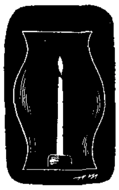


“*What factors influenced your decision to use this particular exit?*”

fragmentation and social disadvantage can be poisonous. To the whiz kids from Harvard and the Sorbonne who are currently running the Mexican government, though, the diversification of Mexican culture is also rich with promise. Nationalism and tradition are *retardatarios*, cosmopolitanism is creative, and what used to be called cultural imperialism is now known as “the inevitable future.”

THE obsession with modernity springs directly from President Salinas de Gortari. Now only forty-four, he was in his mid-thirties when, as Secretary of Planning and the Budget, he masterminded the plan that pulled Mexico out from under its foreign-debt crisis and into full-tilt privatization and liberalization of the economy. He is a “son of the Party”—a second-generation hierarch in the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or PRI, which has been in power for most of this century. The revolution the Party's name refers to occurred from 1910 to—depending on how one counts—about 1929, and in it Indian peasants, an angry and modernizing northern bourgeoisie, and an urban intelligentsia fought against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz and then against each other. Over the decades, the survivors of this bloody game have evolved into what some consider the wiliest guardians of the status quo since the time of the Pharaohs. The system the PRI perfected has been particularly successful in dealing with a problem that the former Soviet Union, for one, never solved: every six years, there is an orderly transition of power, in which the ruling President designates a meticulously trained successor to run in what has been a largely uncontested election. The virtues of the resulting *estabilidad monolítica* have long been a favorite topic of the system's bards, and, in truth, during all the decades that the rest of Latin America was convulsed with insurgency, stability was the keynote for the country ruled by the Institutional Revolutionary Party. A sly newspaper columnist has taken to printing the Party's name “P[R]I” whenever it appears, but actually that is unfair, because if any government in the past sixty years has shaken things up to a degree that could nearly be described as revolutionary it is the government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

Like *glasnost*, Salinas de Gortari's quasi revolution has had as much to do with making changes as with opening up the country to the possibility of even greater—almost inconceivable—change. He has opened up the electoral process to serious contenders from what were once token opposition parties, despite the fact that he barely won his own Presidential election—or perhaps even lost it, if the opposition is to be believed. He has, despite charges of fraud regarding this election and others, opened up the government itself, forcing an increasingly irate PRI to recognize the electoral victories of three opposition gubernatorial candidates. He has opened up the traditional, PRI-controlled union structure to what some see as ruthless depredation by transnational corporations and others see as full capitalist relations. And, even before the treaty, he opened up the country to greatly increased commercial exchange with the United States. The political *apertura* is based on the premise that the PRI can face a limited electoral challenge without putting its ultimate power at risk, and the economic *apertura* on the belief that Mexico can face barrier-free trade with an economy twenty-five times its own size and survive. A big, mustachioed truck driver I fell into conversation with one evening at the Tenampa, in Garibaldi, reminded me that this is not an unreasonable hope. “I'm from the north, from the state of Chihuahua!” he shouted over the din of competing mariachis. “And, unlike those of you from farther south, I know what it is to be intimate with the United States.” He pointed to his cowboy boots, his ten-gallon hat, his jeans. “All my clothes are from the United States, but does that mean that I don't look Mexican? As for trading with the gringos, I can tell you that that's nothing new. Remember *fayuca*?” He meant contraband. “There's always been trade between Mexico and the United States. The only difference is that, before, it wasn't free.” He rubbed thumb and forefinger together to indicate the bribes that were paid as a matter of course to bring in anything from nail polish to cars. “I'm for the free-trade treaty,” he declared, and then, to make it clear that he did not suffer from any lack of patriotism, he called a mariachi over and sang “México Lindo” with them for me.



As everyone knows, though, the north is not *el México profundo*, and that is so precisely because of its dangerous proximity to the source of all cultural contamination. The white-skinned north is industrialized, optimistic, open to foreign influence, and vastly more prosperous than the Indian south. Though *norteños* sing *rancheras*, they also have music of their own, which is not at all tormented but, rather, cheery and literally upbeat, being based on the polka. The essayist Carlos Monsiváis calls *norteño* music “the soundtrack for modernity,” and it may be that its booming nationwide acceptance is a sign that non-*norteño* Mexicans are willing to see life as something other than one long training session in pain. Perhaps it is also true that neither *norteños* nor any other Mexicans have anything to fear from a treaty that allows foreign manufacturers to come pouring over the border, but whether economic *apertura* will lead to a final drowning of Mexican culture in United States sauce is not an entirely idle question—at least, not when one is sitting in a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet and eating some of the first fast-food tacos that Taco Bell is hoping to find a mass market for in Mexico City.

BOTH Kentucky Fried Chicken and Taco Bell are subsidiaries of Pepsico, and five months ago, when Pepsico decided that Mexico was ready for a gringo taco, it chose one of its more successful Kentucky Fried Chicken fast-food outlets to test-market the idea. Fast food is a privilege of the middle class here: it's something hygienic and slightly exotic to eat on a weekend with the family before heading out to the country, say, or at lunchtime on those weekdays when the fare at the local *fonda*—vegetable soup, rice à la mexicana, veal birds, and flan, for example—seems too commonplace, or when a better restaurant is too slow and pricey for the occasion. The Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet now offering a sampling of the Taco Bell menu stands at a busy intersection of an upwardly mobile middle-class neighborhood and boasts Rufino Tamayo reproductions on its walls. About half of the well-dressed customers sitting at *típico*-style wooden tables were having the Colonel's batter-fried special, and the rest were having tacos and nachos, that dubious Tex-Mex contribution to the world of food. I asked a pretty, densely made-up young woman and her date what I should have, and they recommended the shredded-beef taco and, less warmly, the pork carnitas, which turned out to taste precisely like ground-up, very salty paper sautéed in chicken fat. The shredded-beef taco had better seasoning, and the tortillas were surprisingly good, but the nachos—over which I had been instructed to pump a chrome-yellow substance that had the consistency of toothpaste—were inedible.

When spokesmen for the company are asked to explain why residents of one of the great culinary capitals of the world might be interested in Mexican fast food, they have replied that the one thing Mexico lacks is somewhere to get a clean, cheap, fast taco. This is patently untrue, and shows surprisingly flabby work on the part of the market researchers, for, while it is true that no Mexican taco stand looks like a NASA food-preparation station, many such stands are clean, all of them are cheap and fast, and even the chain-food taco stands (there are several, including one down the street from Kentucky Fried Chicken) feature a variety of selections far beyond the scope of the Taco Bell menu: chorizo tacos, squash-flower quesadillas, fresh-mushroom-and-poblano-chili soft tacos, and chicken hard tacos served with heavy cream, chopped onions, and lettuce are all standard. At the Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet, I asked a well-dressed couple who had come in from the suburbs why they had decided to have a Taco Bell lunch, and they replied, in effect, that it was because the place was cheap, clean, and fast. "But I'm a little disappointed," the woman added. "This doesn't taste like the real thing, does it? What I wanted was those big taco shells stuffed with salad and Kraft cheese and all *kinds* of stuff, like what you get in Texas. But I asked the manager, and he says they're going to start making them soon." In other words, Taco Bell tacos sell because they're American, and, to judge from the size and enthusiasm of the clientele, they sell very well indeed.

I WENT to see the postmodern *ranchera* singer Astrid Hadad's show a few days after my Taco Bell lunch, and as she worked her way to a tiny stage through the crowded bar where she was performing she peddled tacos from a basket. "What kind would you like?" she asked her customers. "Now that we have the free-trade treaty, I can offer you hamburger tacos, hot-dog tacos, chili-con-carne tacos. . . ." For her presentations, Hadad likes to wear red lipstick with carnival glitter in it—on her eyelids—and a Jean Paul Gaultier-like cone-shaped bra, which she later rips off and replaces with a big, anatomically accurate foam-rubber heart. Her show, which has been attracting ever more loyal audiences over the last four years, relies heavily on the nostalgia value of *ranchera* music and on its inherent campiness, but it would not be so energetically appealing if her powerful voice were not a perfect vehicle for *rancheras* or if her understanding of a *ranchera* prototype—the brassy, hard-drinking, love-wounded dame—were not intuitive. Hadad belted out, "As if I were a sock, you step on me all day," and her audience howled with laughter and the acid pleasure of recognition. When, in a frenzy of Mexican passion, she asked what would become of her heart—"this bleeding, burning, conquered, crunched, roasted, ground, blended, anguished heart"—a couple of people in the audience rose to give her a standing ovation. Hadad had come onstage with peasant-style braids and wearing a typical *china poblana* embroidered skirt. Now she loosened the braids, tore off the skirt to reveal a slinky black dress underneath, removed the heart from the dress's strapless bodice, added long gloves, checked her image in an empty mirror frame, and retold the well-known myth of Quetzalcoatl, the god-king of Tula, and his rival Tezcatlipoca, or Smoking Mirror. "Tezcatlipoca is jealous because Quetzalcoatl is blond, so he gives him some pulque. Quetzalcoatl gets drunk, screws his own sister, wakes up with a terrible hangover, and sees his image in Tezcatlipoca's mirror. He heads for the beach and sets sail, and as he leaves he promises to return. So he does, the blond, blue-eyed god, and that's how we discovered the joys of"—here Hadad licked her lips lasciviously—"cultural penetration."

PHARAOH

"The future ain't what it used to be,"
said the sage of the New York Yankees
as he pounded his mitt, releasing
the red dust of the infield
into the harshly illuminated evening air.

Big hands. Men with big hands
make things happen. The surgeon,
when I asked how big your tumor was,
held forth his substantial fist
with its globed class ring.

Home again, we live as charily as strangers.
Things are off: touch rankles, food
is not good. Even the kindness of friends
turns burdensome; their flowers sadden
us, so many and so fair.

I woke in the night to see your
diminished bulk lying beside me—
you on your back, like a sarcophagus
as your feet held up the covers.
The things you might need in the next
life surrounded you—your comb and glasses,
water, a book, and a pen.

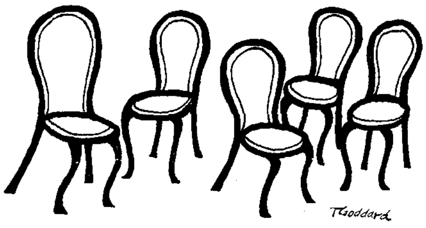
—Jane Kenyon

Offstage, Hadad turned out to be a tiny woman with a sharp Lebanese profile (it is a curious fact of cultural life here that many of the most devoted *mexicanistas* are themselves—like Hadad and like Frida Kahlo—first- or second-generation Mexicans) and an intellectual manner. Not surprisingly, she declared that what first attracted her to *rancheras* was that they are so essentially Mexican. "I think it has to do with the attitude toward suffering that we inherited from the Aztecs," she said. "It's not that we have an extraordinary capacity for suffering—everyone does. It's the way we *relish* it. I think only Russians compare with us in that. And then there's the element of machismo. Again, it's not that men here beat their wives more, because I'm sure that Germans do it just as much; it's that here they boast about it. Obviously, I'm very critical of that, but what keeps me coming back to the music is the passion. Now that we're all becoming so rational and sensible, it's getting harder and harder to find passion in our lives; I think that's what we all seek in the *ranchera*."

I asked Hadad why she cracked so many jokes about the Free Trade Agreement in her show, and why she thought her audience was so responsive to them, and she said it was because of the enormous apprehension that people are feeling about it. She pointed out that even the great Mexican movie goddess María Félix had taken the unusual step of speaking out publicly against the treaty, warning that it might cause Mexican values—not to mention factories—to collapse. Like nearly everyone else who is fearful of the treaty, Hadad confessed that she had no idea what was in it. "But it seems obvious to me that the little guys—us—are not going to be the ones calling the shots," she said. "The government gets all excited describing the wonderful things that will result from the treaty, but I say '*What* wonders?' As far as I can make out, all it means is that in the future we're going to be more like South Korea and less like us."

THIS is, in fact, precisely what one of Salinas de Gortari's bright young intellectuals described to me some time ago as his best hope: that if Mexico's debt situation remains stable, if its workers can be persuaded to let wage increases remain just below the rate of inflation, if monetary policy and inflation itself continue under tight government control, enough foreign investment will land here "to turn this country into South Korea, or maybe Taiwan."

It won't be easy to make that happen. Over the last decade, Mexico's financial planners have brought the economy back from the brink, but that doesn't mean that the country is in marvellous shape. Ten years ago, the world learned that Mexico was on the verge of collapse when the Secretary of Finance announced that his country would not be able to meet the commercial banks' schedule of payments. Today, the public-sector debt is down from its 1987 high, eighty-one billion dollars, to seventy-four billion, and combined private- and public-sector debt represents only twenty-nine per cent of the gross domestic product. (It represented seventy-eight per cent of the G.D.P. as recently as 1986.) On the home front, though, things are shakier. Workers would have to receive at least a thirty-per-cent wage increase to recover even the ascetic standard of living they enjoyed when the crisis began, but such increases are out of the question, partly because the government wants to keep wages attractive for foreign investors, and partly because so many businesses and industries, large and small, are either heading straight for bankruptcy or barely making ends meet. Whatever the real causes of the business collapse may be, several trade associations are laying the blame for their woes on the huge wave of United States imports that a liberalized tariff policy has made possible, and they are fearful that the treaty will bring in foreign competition at unbearable levels. In any event, a punishing wage policy, severe budget cutbacks, and tight money appear to be the only measures capable of preventing the kind of three-digit inflation that plagues so much of Latin America. The government always promises lower levels, but so far it has been unable to keep inflation below fifteen per cent.



For Salinas de Gortari and his economic advisers, there is just one way out of this economic gridlock, and that is the Free Trade Agreement. I talked about the treaty with the novelist, historian, and magazine editor Héctor Aguilar Camín, who is perhaps the most outstanding of the pro-Salinas intellectuals. The last Mexican President to have a respectable set of house intellectuals was Lázaro Cárdenas, who nationalized the petroleum industry in 1938 and practiced a fervent leftist nationalism, which subsequent Presidents paid skillful lip service to. Salinas de Gortari's thinkers are remarkable not only for high I.Q.s and fancy educations but also for a self-proclaimed freedom from the bonds of nationalist thought. Aguilar Camín, for example, is completely unconcerned about the fact that the treaty will open the doors to investment capital from abroad. The point is, he told me, that Mexicans' standard of living will not improve unless at least twenty million new sources of income are created, and that will not happen with the country's available investment capital. The treaty, which is seen across the border as a potential threat to United States jobs, is seen by people like Aguilar Camín as a crucial guarantee of economic, and thus political, stability in a country that could well export twice as many illegal aliens (and illegal drugs) if things don't improve.

"If the treaty isn't signed, economic expectations will fall, and so will investment," Aguilar Camín said. "This could lead to a very high budget deficit and a consequent devaluation of the peso. There's not much more that can be trimmed from the budget without causing enormous social pain. But if there were a devaluation, even if it were only a moderate one of, say, twenty per cent, the political impact would be devastating; once again, we'd be seeing capital flight abroad, and a completely destabilized business climate." Indeed, the treaty's eventual ratification is so important for the business climate that the Mexican Bolsa, or stock exchange, which only last year was one of the fastest-growing stock exchanges in the world, has been losing points steadily since June, largely as a result of jitteriness over the possible election of Bill Clinton to the White House and a possible rejection of the treaty by his administration. After Clinton spoke out in favor of the treaty, the Bolsa soared.

The highly technical trade and tariff

treaty that Aguilar Camín was describing was an entirely different kind of beast from the culturally ominous one that frightens Astrid Hadad and María Félix, and I found him to be sharply impatient with any discussion of cultural imperialism. "The more Americanized we become, the more the idea scares us," he said. "But the fact is that United States culture is already part of our landscape and our way of being. The élite is bilingual, ten per cent of our population lives in the United States, and the tribulations of Woody Allen and Mia Farrow are like a family affair to us. Our greatest writers were weaned on United States authors. Perhaps the United States is the enemy, but it is also our big opportunity, and, while I think that with the free-trade treaty we will have more fights than ever with the United States, these will be about things like tomato and broom quotas, and not about the twisted rhetoric that for years had us saying fantasizing, idiotic things on the order of 'They have the know-how, but we have civilization.' A fundamental rhetorical change has taken place: in the nineteen-seventies, Mexico was supposed to be 'proudly Third World,' but today, we want to belong to the First World."

AGUILAR CAMÍN, bright and urbane and at ease with power as he is, doesn't seem to be the type who gravitates toward controversy. Yet his role as a supervisor and co-author of a newly revised official history textbook for Mexico's grade schools has people in the greatest uproar about the Salinas de Gortari government and its modernizing intentions that his Presidency has seen. The scandal began percolating in the back pages of the local press about a week before I met with Aguilar Camín, and rapidly moved to the front pages.

The new textbook project was announced at the beginning of the year as part of an educational reform package that was given the full, glorifying treatment accorded to major Presidential initiatives: there were decrees, signing ceremonies, adulatory press stories, and a succession of what are known as adhesion speeches (in which the speaker, by means of flattery, attaches himself firmly to the initiative and its foreseeable rewards). Aguilar Camín and a flotilla of top-of-the-line intellectuals got to work. Then, in August, teachers, parents, and education reporters opened the brightly colored new textbooks and discovered a history that was both subtly and radically different from the one they themselves had learned in school. The priest Miguel Hidalgo, whose fiery call to arms in 1810 for independence from Spain became the touchstone of all nationalist sentiment, is described cursorily. The account of the traumatic war with the United States is rendered in reassuring understatement. Emiliano Zapata, the southern leader of Mexico's agrarian revolutionary tide, who was finally betrayed and assassinated in 1919 by the *norteño* revolutionaries, is portrayed not as a pure and heroic peasant but as merely one leader among several warring factions. Earlier generations learned that the dictator Porfirio Díaz, who first came to power in 1877, was guilty of genocide against the untamable Yaqui Indian nation, and that he ruled tyrannically and unswervingly in favor of a small white-skinned percentage of the population who lived off the sweat of an impoverished Indian majority. In the new textbooks the reviled dictator—whose stubborn hold on power led directly to the revolution that the PRI honors in its name—turns out not to have been such a bad guy after all. "Porfirio Díaz' long rule created a climate of peace and encouraged the country's economic development," the section on him concludes. "His government diminished individual liberties, concentrated power in a few hands, and put a brake on the development of democracy."

Aguilar Camín is not the only modernizing academic to see the PRI's favorite villain as a progressive dictator who created the infrastructure that made a twentieth-century Mexico possible. But he is the only one who is on such friendly personal terms with a President whose own rule invites so many comparisons to Díaz: "Don Porfirio" started out in politics as a supporter of the ultraliberal Benito Juárez, then ruled in favor of a tiny, conservative élite. Salinas de Gortari, for his part, has turned his back on the party that brought him to power. He is currently "refounding" it with policies that are often anathema to the old guard and very pleasing to the PRI's most threatening opposition, the conservative Partido Acción Nacional, which also welcomes the refurbishing of Díaz' image. Banks have been reprivatized, a decade after President José López Portillo, in a fit of pique, appropriated them for the state. The Revolution's keystone, the Agrarian Reform Law, which assigned inalienable communal lands to millions of peasants (and kept most of them desperately poor), has been modified to permit private sales. Legislative restrictions have been loosened to allow foreign investment greater leeway than at any other time since the dictatorship. Even though they are patently sensible, these moves have the left and the traditional PRI in an uproar, because of the larger ideological issues that are perceived to underlie them. But the textbook rehabilitation of Porfirio Díaz rubs the wrong way even for people who don't care much about politics. This is not primarily because Díaz was a dictator—there is nothing particularly democratic about the PRI people live with and often support. Nor is it just because Díaz presided over a society even more contemptuous of its great unwashed than the present one. It is, rather, because, even though Porfirio Díaz started out in life as an impoverished, Mixtec-speaking *mestizo*, he has always been perceived as profoundly un-Mexican in his impact on society. He modernized the country, but did it by bringing in foreign capital. He turned Mexico City into one of the loveliest in the world, but Frenchified it. He presided, as the textbook says, over thirty years of stability, but did so wearing a tricorne hat and a ridiculous tin-pot-general's uniform. It may seem foolish—or suggest a pathetic insecurity—for a whole nation to go around worrying that reading good things about such a man or eating lunch at Taco Bell will somehow diminish its Mexican essence. The point is, though, that nationalism is still the great common meeting ground of a society that might otherwise be as tragically riven as any in Latin America. It is not in the voting booth but in the Zócalo on Independence Night, surrounded by mariachis and showered in confetti, that the vast mass of the *pueblo* feels like citizenry. It is in the kitchen, where lowly cooks prepare glorious food for the children of the middle class, that Mexicans forge a common heritage. It is in Garibaldi, bellowing out *ranchera* songs, that rich papa's boys out on a spree and truck drivers in from the road can be equal.

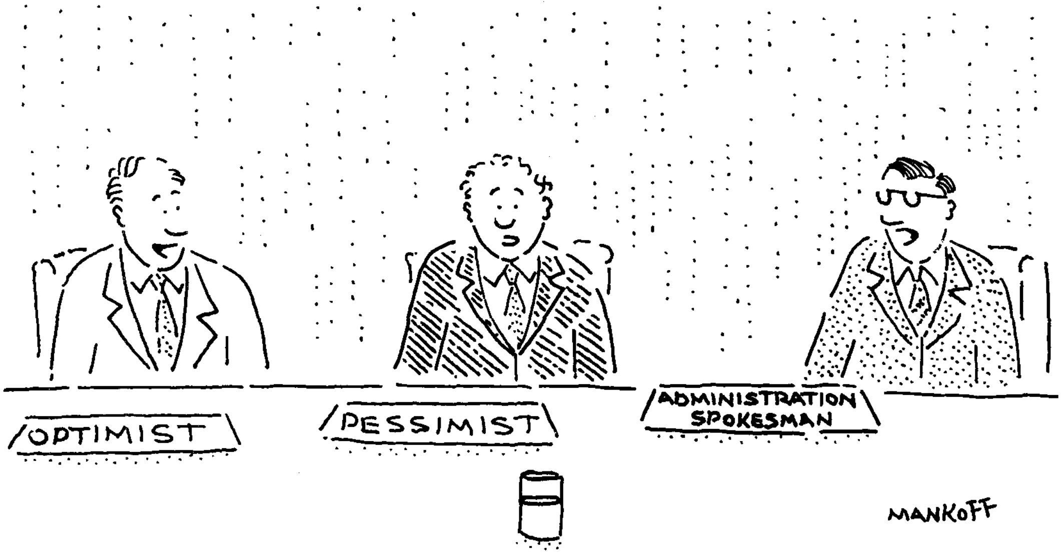
I FLEW from Mexico City to Tijuana, a scorching-hot border town that can be seen either as the hideous, seedy product of more than a century of cultural penetration or as the defiant, lively result of a hundred years of cultural resistance. Just a few miles south of San Diego, Tijuana reigns as the world capital of Spanglish, shantytowns, and revolting souvenirs, yet, despite it all, remains completely Mexican. The United States may be just an imaginary line away, but on this side of the line driving becomes more creative, street life improves, bribes are taken, and hairdos are more astonishing. I thought Tijuana would be a good place to catch a show by Juan Gabriel, a singer and prolific composer who is the most unlikely heir to the mantle of *ranchera* greatness that could ever be imagined.

Juan Gabriel likes to perform at *palenques*, or cockfight arenas, which are a traditional element of state fairs. When I arrived at the Tijuana *palenque*, around midnight, several hundred people were watching the last fight, perched on chairs in a coliseumlike arrangement of concrete tiers surrounding a small circular arena. Those in the know say that hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of bets are placed in the course of a fight, but all I saw was half a dozen men with little notebooks standing in the arena, catching mysterious silent signals from the audience and scribbling down figures, while the two fighting cocks were displayed by their handlers. After a few minutes, the men with notebooks left, and the cocks, outfitted with razorlike spurs, were set on the ground. The cocks flew at each other, spurs first, while the audience watched in tense, breathless silence. In a matter of minutes, one of the animals lay trembling on the ground, its guts spilling out, and the other was proclaimed the victor, to a brief, dull cheer. Instantly, Juan Gabriel's roadies moved in.

The instruments they set up—electric organ and piano, two sets of drums—are not the ones normally associated with *ranchera* music, but then Juan Gabriel is not what one would think of as a typical mariachi singer. For starters, he is from the border himself—from Ciudad Juárez, where he was born, and where he was raised in an orphanage. When he burst on the pop-music scene, in the early seventies, radio audiences often mistook his high-pitched voice for a woman's. His fey mannerisms became the subject of crude jokes. He has been press-shy ever since a scurrilous book by a purported confidant fed hungry speculations about his sexual preferences. Yet, in this nation of self-proclaimed machos, Juan Gabriel has been able to perform before a standing-room-only crowd in the Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico's Carnegie Hall. He lives in Los Angeles, uses electronic backups and percussion, and writes songs that never mention drunkenness or two- or three-timing women, but when men in Garibaldi drink and fall into the confessional mode these days their musical inspiration invariably includes songs composed by Juan Gabriel.

As the first, wailing *ranchera* chords tore through the din and Juan Gabriel emerged from the bullpen, there was a roar from the *palenque*, and in the roar there was a call for blood. The composition of the audience had changed: a majority of women, mostly middle-aged and in girls'-night-out groups, had filled the stands, along with a large minority of romantic couples and a dense sprinkling of men in groups. A lot of the men were wearing big *norteño* hats, and in the front row a group of couples and male buddies in big hats and heavy gold chains had set up beer cans and bottles of tequila along the concrete ledge that defined the arena space. The women in the audience were shouting their love for Juan Gabriel hysterically, but a couple of men behind me were shouting something quite different, and so were a lot of the men in big hats. "*Marica!*" and "*Jotón!*" they yelled, meaning "Fag!" or "Queer!" They yelled this over and over, and, because the cherub-faced Juan Gabriel in his graying middle age has put on something of a paunch, someone improvised an insult that was quickly copied: "You're pregnant, you faggot! Go home!" The men had paid between forty and sixty dollars a head to indulge in this pleasure, and Juan Gabriel, circling the arena slowly to acknowledge the majority's applause, also acknowledged this generosity with a small, graceful curtsy before he began to sing.

His music is proof of the fact that the *ranchera* has changed as much as Mexico has, and that in doing so it has survived. His backup singers at the *palenque* were two skinny, curvy black women in tight dresses: they chimed in on the chorus as required, but with distinctly gringo accents. Standing between them and his electronic band, Juan Gabriel sang and twirled to music from his pop repertoire, punctuating some of the jazzier songs with belly rolls and shimmies that drove the women and the machos wild in opposite ways. There was rather a lot of this cheerful music, and then he slowed down and began to sing a real *ranchera*, a song of bad love, loss, and pain, in which the



"Half full."

"Half empty."

"Half empty because of congressional inaction, and half full because of the tireless efforts of the President."

composer makes abject offers to his departed love. In case the fugitive should ever decide to return, Juan Gabriel sang, "You'll find me here, in my usual spot, in the same city, with the same crowd, so you can find everything just as you left it." By the second verse, there was no need for him to sing at all, because the members of the audience were chanting the words for themselves with the rapt reverence accorded an anthem. "I just forgot again," the audience sang, "that you never loved me." I glanced at a couple of the big guys sitting in the front row, armed with their bottles of tequila, who had earlier folded their arms protectively across their chests and smirked whenever Juan Gabriel wiggled in their direction. Now they were singing.

A dozen fawn-colored *charro* hats wobbled at the entrance to the bullpen, and the audience, seeing the mariachis arrive, roared itself hoarse with welcome. Gold decorations along the musicians' trousers caught the light. The men lined up facing Juan Gabriel's band, adjusted their hats, took up their instruments, and filled the *palenque* with the ripe, aching, heart-torn sound of the mariachi. Juan Gabriel, singing this time about how hard it is to forget, was now not queening at all. The big guys sitting across from me leaned into each other, swaying companionably to the music, like everyone else in the audience. Behind me, the last heckler had finally shut up. Juan Gabriel sang a lilting *huapango* and a couple of *sones*, without pausing once for chatter. He segued from one song to the next or went through long medleys, the doo-wop girls bursting in occasionally with a trill or two. Then the girls left the stage, and so did the band. Juan Gabriel, alone with the mariachis, slowed down for the introductory chords of a song that begins, "Podría volver," and, recognizing these, the audience squealed in ecstatic pain. "I could return, but out of sheer pridefulness I won't," the lyrics say, in what is perhaps the most perfect of a hundred *ranchera* hymns to the unbending pride of the loser. "If you want me to come back, you should have thought of that before you left me." Here and there, his listeners yelped as if some very tasty salt had just been rubbed into their national wound. Life hurts. I hurt. The hell with you: I'll survive, Juan Gabriel sang. In the front row, the two big guys looked immensely happy, and just about ready to weep. ♦

STORYBOARD

ROSS AT ONE HUNDRED

by Roger Angell

THE studio photograph of Harold Ross that hangs in a central corridor of this magazine's editorial offices has been softened to blur his homely profile, his awkward hair, his protruding lips, and his habitual craning posture of impatience, curiosity, and irritable hope. A coaxed smile makes him look almost kindly, for God's sake (as he would say). Only the eyes, behind his horn-rimmed glasses, are the real Ross, which is to say smart, amused, implacably doubting. The photograph, which was taken in the forties, is in black-and-white, and somehow appears to have aged more than its subject. Ross has carried the day once again, even over Bachrach.

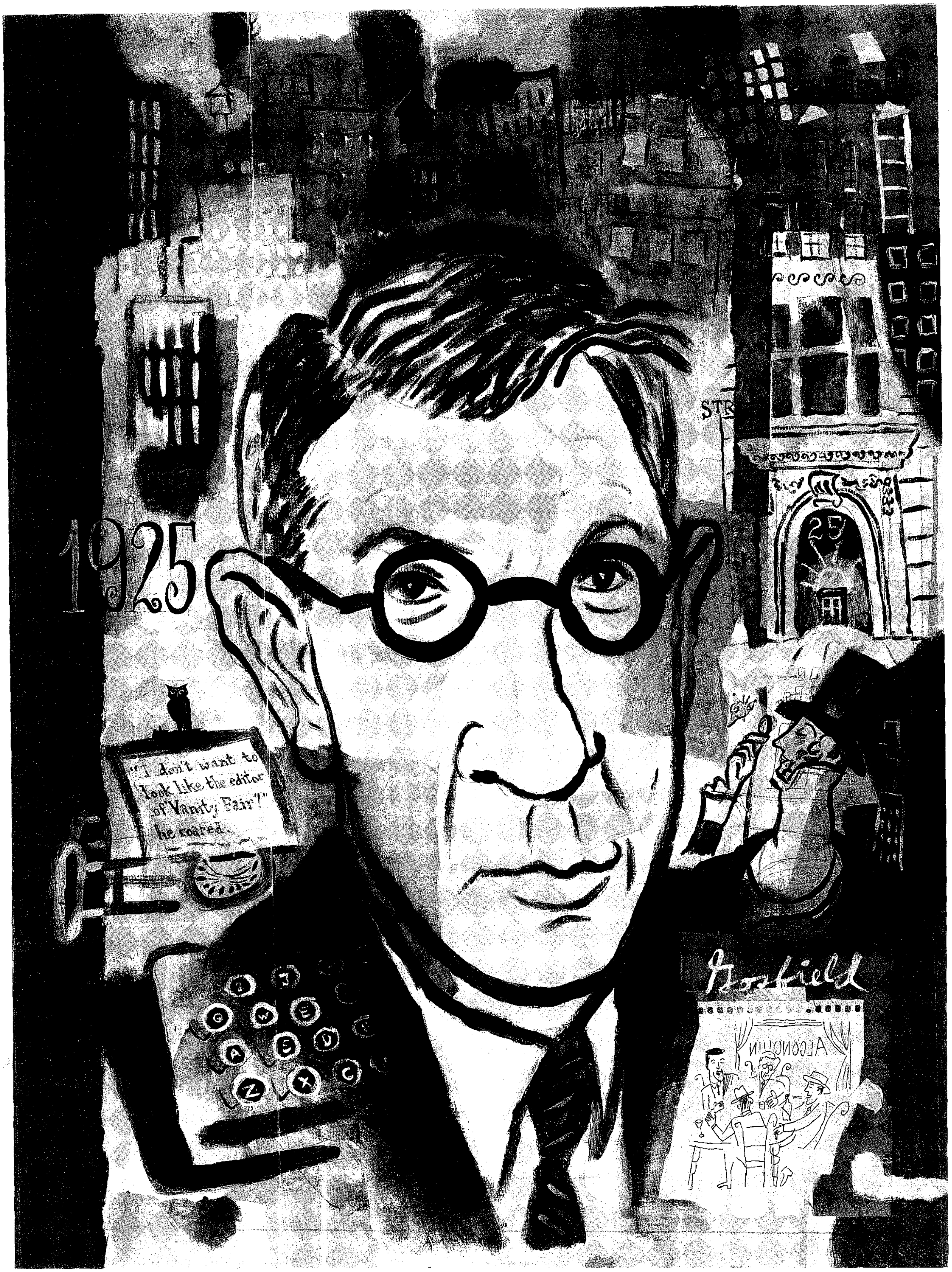
Ross's hundredth birthday comes along this week, on November 6th, and most of the writers and editors and artists who pass his portrait these days know scarcely more about him than the skimpy, fabled details: Ross the country bumpkin from Aspen, Colorado, who founded (in 1925) and fostered the sophisticated, uncynical, ever-changing, unchangeable, much loved, often reviled, local, national weekly reader. Ross, the sketchily educated hobo journalist who put together, coaxed, enraged, and excited a legendary staff of editors—who, in turn, drove him and accompanied him to fresh new levels of journalism, fiction, humor, artwork, and unponderous critical commentary—and brought aboard the essential contributors, from Peter Arno to E. B. White, from Benchley and Liebling and Perelman to Edmund Wilson and Vladimir Nabokov, and, it seemed, invented a fresh magazine every week. This list is long, of course—Rea Irvin, Thurber, Ralph Barton, Hokinson, Flanner, Gibbs, McKelway, O'Hara, Cheever, Ogden Nash, Addams, Joseph Mitchell, Steinberg, Maxwell, George Price—and, we trust, still lengthening. Up on another list belong the three editors, starting with William Shawn, who have held the top post after Ross, without (they would all insist) replacing him.

Ross's quirky ways were celebrated, but concealed a supple and inquiring habit of mind: the editor's instrument. His hayseed pose, for example, persisted because it allowed him to say, in effect, "I'm just a small-town boy from out West, so you're going to have to make this paragraph plain enough for me to understand it." A longtime staff writer recalls a day when Ross took him out to lunch, in the mid-forties. The conversation turned to authors, and Ross suddenly said, "How about this Hemingway—is he any good?" The younger man was embarrassed, because Hemingway at the time was the world's most famous writer, the undisputed Numero Uno. "Then I stopped laughing," he recalls, "and for the first time in years I went back and tried to decide what I really thought about Hemingway. Ross had asked the essential question."

Ross died in 1951, which means that his magazine has outlived him in both senses of the word, yet to those of us who knew him and wrote for him he feels close at hand. Here he comes down the hall again (the dingy battleship-gray hall of our old digs) with a sheaf of galleys in his hand, a cigarette drooping from his broad mouth, and a question of vast magnitude—a caption? a semicolon? a threat to freedom?—clearly on his mind. He stops to talk about it, offering piteous complaints and barked laughter by turns, and down the margin of the topmost galley proof we can see and almost read the latest pencilled list of his dreaded, infuriating, ridiculous, piercing text queries: "Who he?" "Does this kind of door open *out*?" "Not clear to me." And perhaps a killing "Bushwa!"

He departs, trailing ashes and a vague farewell wave, and we, from this distance, wave back. Happy Birthday, Ross! And then, looking over the words of thanks we have written for this page, we put the old questions to ourselves by habit, by inheritance: "Is it clear?" "Is it simple?" "Is it any good?" And (always a little since he has gone) "Who we?" ♦

JOSH GOSFIELD


1925
"I don't want to look like the editor of Vanity Fair!" he roared.
STR
25
ALGONQUIN
Gosfield

FICTION

LOADED GUN

by Antonya Nelson

"I'M going to tell you something your mother doesn't know," her father said. Edie was fifteen; she didn't want to hear such things. Her older sister's warning came to her too late: "Whatever you do, don't get in the car with Dad. That's where he traps you when he wants to talk." She braced herself, watching the Kansas winter landscape go by, the shoulder strap of her seat belt like a leash at her throat. They had been discussing Edie's cousin Tara—Terrible Tara, Edie and her brother called her. They'd been laughing, after her father had pursed his lips to imitate Tara's cooing voice and shifted his rear on the seat to suggest her undulating, henlike bottom. "Your mother doesn't ever want to hear bad things about her family," Edie's father went on, stern now. He steered as if strangling the wheel, as if it might leap away, and he never went faster than fifty miles an hour. "Tara is living with her father," Edie's father told her. Edie nodded, waiting for the part her mother didn't know. Though Tara was thirty years old, she had yet to live on her own. For a while, she had stayed in Edie's family's basement. Edie's father looked away from the road at Edie's profile. "I mean, they're *living together*," he said.

She found herself gargling something at him, her face reddening like a bloodstain.

"Don't tell your mother."

She shook her head.

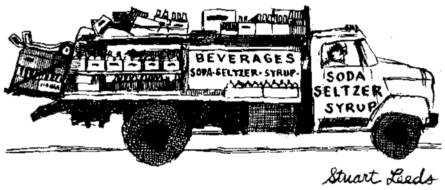
Cousin Tara couldn't be contained. Every memory Edie had of her was ugly. Whenever Tara saw Edie she'd say something like "So here we are, Eeds, the black sheep of the family." It was true that Edie had been caught shoplifting the year before. Also true that she'd stolen some of Tara's Valium. But Tara always intimated that there was more to it, that they were *close*, that they *understood* each other.

In the car, Edie had been trying to tell her father about the times Tara had insulted their family, but it was hard to explain. Tara was sly, and you could mistake her meanness for joking. It was *supposed* to be joking. "She's jealous," Edie's mother always replied, to the same information. It didn't make her mother angry, just sad. For a while Edie would try to feel sorry for her cousin, who had never finished school, who couldn't keep a job. Poor Tara. Her parents had been teen-agers, reckless and foolish, and she'd grown up at her grandparents' house, with Edie's grandfather embarrassed by her.

But Edie's pity never lasted long. Under some quack advice, Tara would drag their grandmother to a therapy session and proceed to call her names. Or she'd steal morphine from the hospital where she used to work, and get written up in the newspaper. A few years ago, she had made Edie's mother drive all the way to Topeka to pick her up from the drunk tank after her motorcycle had been impounded. Edie could still see Tara's face, that same rubbery, sloe-eyed expression—she looked as if she were permanently high, flirting, unrepentant, insinuating. "Pren," she would say to Prentice, Edie's shy brother, "you old egghead, lemme yank your chest hair." Worst of all was that Edie's mother refused to see Tara for who she was. Edie wanted to know why the family couldn't disown her. She tried to explain that Tara was *evil*, and probably contagious, but her mother always provided a forgiving explanation for it all: poor childhood, her mother's death, lack of luck.

"Your mother's loyal," Edie's father said now, as if he'd been reading her mind. "She never wants to assume anything bad about anybody, especially someone in the family, like Tara."

Edie's mother was naïve; even Edie, the baby, knew that. "Mom's a chump," Edie told her father glumly.



Stuart Leeds

He gave her a lengthy glance before saying, "Someday it might be you who needs her forgiveness."

They swung onto a dirt road. Ahead was the old mill where he bought flour and cornmeal. In the last year he'd begun baking bread—every Sunday, listening to opera on public radio in the kitchen, wearing an apron and drinking red wine, slamming heavy armfuls of dough on the Formica—and he insisted on driving the forty miles from Wichita to Harkins' Mill to shop for ingredients. The mill still ran with a waterwheel. Edie's sister had said, "Beware those long trips when you can't even roll down the window. You know he's going to say something *you* don't *want to hear*."

At the mill her father parked and set the emergency brake. The building looked like a giant's house, with huge double doors and a turret on either side. It was February, freezing cold—smoke puffed from a black chimney on the roof. The waterwheel wasn't revolving, because the stream had turned to ice. "How do they work the mill without the wheel?" Edie asked her father as they stepped from the Mustang.

"What?" he said, his hand at his deaf right ear.

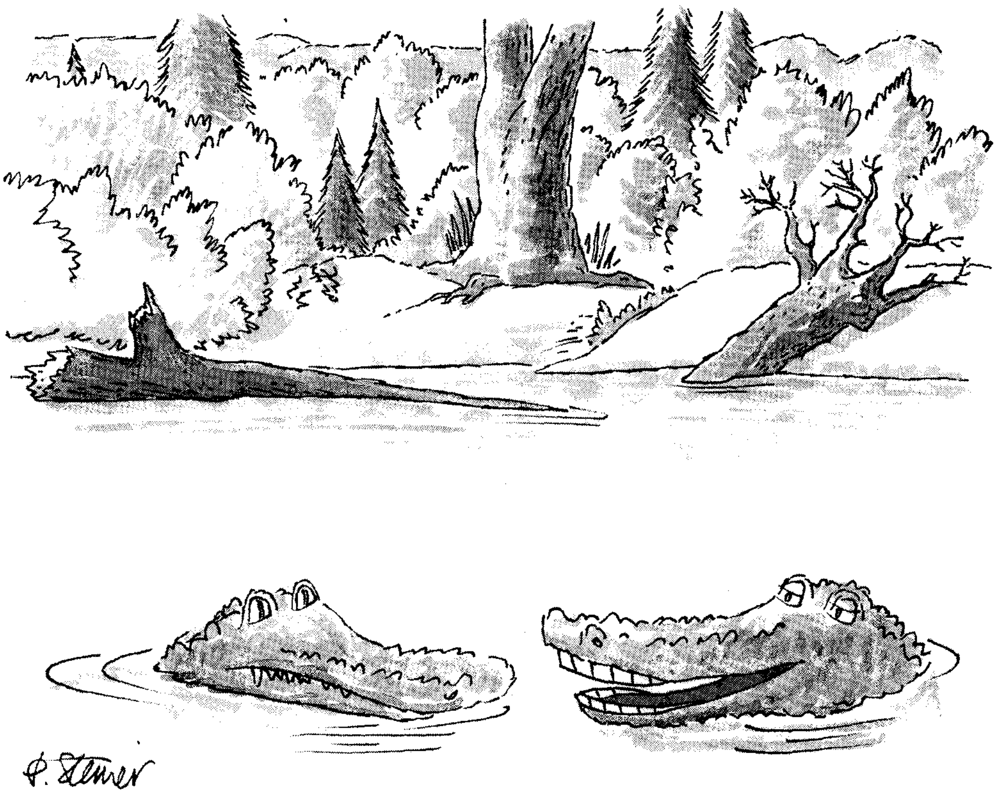
"No wheel," Edie said, pointing to the Gothic structure. Icicles hung from its wooden cups.

"There's a regular electric generator," her father told her. He fitted his cap on his head, cleared his throat, and asked Edie if she was coming inside.

"I'm going to just walk around," she said. "I'm carsick."

He nodded and moved off toward the eight-foot wooden doors.

Edie climbed down the incline behind the mill, down among the old wrecked cars that the mill's owners either collected or tolerated. There were a half-dozen rusting vehicles—one from each of the last six decades, Edie decided. She peered through the empty space where the windshield should have



"Cosmetic dentistry changed my life."

been on an old farm truck, then crawled into the back seat of what had once been a plush sedan. Springs coiled where the cushions used to be; a pile of beer cans on the floorboard was probably forty years younger than the car. Edie bent, and sat delicately on a wooden frame. She wondered when they quit using wood in the manufacturing of automobiles.

This car's windshield was also missing, and the wind blew through. Edie's feet were so cold that she couldn't feel her toes—it was as if her legs ended in points, like big pencils. She studied the dashboard, thinking of Tara. It was impossible to imagine her cousin having sex with her father—a man with muttonchop sideburns whom Edie had met just once, long ago—without also imagining *herself* having sex with *her* father. For a few seconds Edie didn't realize she was staring at the car's steering wheel—her own father, for God's sake—and then she blinked to clear her mind. In the hard plastic, at the top of the circle, was a perfect curve of teeth where the driver's mouth had been hurled into the wheel. Edie sucked in her breath and scrambled out of the wreck. Her own teeth ached suddenly with a sharp bitterness, like cavities. The front end of the car was smashed and pleated, rust growing in the folds, taking over the pretty fifties turquoise. She glanced once more through the driver's window and then reached her fingers in and ran them over the marks—eight cold little indentations in a perfect arc.

Her father stood waiting at their car, his shoes touching at the heels and pointing in nearly opposite directions. The cloth bags of flour sat in the back seat like small passengers leaning into one another. Edie climbed into the front and switched the heater to high. Her father got in and cleared his throat, probably to remind her not to tell her mother about Tara, and Edie turned the radio on. All the way home they listened to the Golden Oldies station Edie's mother liked, the one Edie and her siblings called K-BAD.

TARA came to dinner in March and brought her new boyfriend, Claude—a name she pronounced as if it rhymed with "cow." Tara and Claude drove over in Edie's grandmother's LTD, the two of them in the front while Granna sat meekly in the back. When they arrived, Edie's father had to go help her get out, and the stereo speaker was so loud that the door vibrated. "Oh, shame on us," Tara had proclaimed, laughing her slutty laugh. The noise of her tall white heels on the concrete driveway made Edie's cheeks ache. The new plan was for Tara to move back to Granna's. Of course, this was Edie's mother's idea.

Claude was supposed to be a French chef. "From Canada," Tara told them all. Claude didn't say much, glancing around the house as if casing it, sneering down his large nose at Edie's family. He wore completely mismatched clothes, as if he'd set out to look as foolish as possible. His pants were plaid, his shirt flowered, his suit jacket a brown-and-olive pattern, like office wallpaper. Tara was speeding, chattering a mile a minute while she gaily flung together her contribution to dinner—a salad full of overripe fruit, stuff marked down for quick sale at Food Land. Her hair had been dyed a dull beet color and she'd lost some weight.

Edie's mother pretended nothing was peculiar. She smiled so hard it looked like it hurt; to whatever anybody said she responded with a woofy laugh. She bustled from kitchen to dining room carrying baskets and bowls and utensils, stopping to offer drinks or take orders. Whenever there was even a hint of uncomfortable silence, she launched into one of her stories, which never had anything that you might call a point. Prentice was home from college but staying out of the way, avoiding the onslaught of chores and errands—"projects," their mother often called them—that she would surely hand him. And though Edie liked Prentice, his hunger—his literal need for food—was so powerful that he didn't see the weirdness around him. Edie had told him what her father had revealed about Tara and Tara's father, and Prentice hadn't commented. Their older sister would have wanted to believe it, but Prentice was skeptical about most things Edie told him. She used to be a pretty big liar.

And besides, Tara had brought her boyfriend. Maybe she didn't actually sleep with her father. This made Edie appraise her own father. What had he been talking about, anyway?

At dinner Tara sat next to Edie and said, in a whisper, "If I'd made this chili, I would have used lean beef instead of ground round."

Edie looked down at her bowl, where a clear layer of bright-orange grease floated on the chili. In it she could see a reflection of her eyelashes and nostrils.

"Don't eat it," she told Tara.

Instead, Tara stuck the corner of her napkin in the chili to absorb the grease, then wadded the soiled cloth into her fist. "Prentice," she called across the table. "Yoo-hoo, Earth to Prentice." Prentice looked up from his food, which he had been steadily shovelling in, completely oblivious of everyone. "Help me move tomorrow? Over to Granna's?"

Cornered, Prentice had to say yes. Edie wondered what would happen with Tara's father, if he would simply slide out of the picture the way he had in the past. When she was seven or eight years old, she used to spend the night at Granna's house. Tara was living there between dropping out of nursing school and enrolling in beauty school, and Edie had to sleep in the upstairs bedroom, where Tara also slept. In the night Tara sometimes got into bed with Edie. "You be the man," she would say, rolling Edie on top of herself. Edie only vaguely knew what that meant. While Tara bounced beneath her, Edie would try to hear her grandparents downstairs, Granna in one room, Gransir in another, their distinct but noisy breathing like big, kind animals in the night. Tara was twenty-two or twenty-three; she whispered in Edie's ears the frightening news about what would happen to Edie soon, what future her body held in store. Then Tara would return to her own twin bed, leaving Edie to stare at the dire photograph of her great-grandmother on the wall, the rounded glass of the picture distorting the room and hallway like a fish-eye lens.

At dinner, with her lips too close to Edie's ear, Tara said, "And this iceberg lettuce has absolutely no nutritional value. It's like eating that plastic grass in an Easter basket."

"Don't eat it," Edie repeated.

Claude picked at his chili with a fork and drank beer from the bottle, even though he'd been given a frosted glass, which now sat empty beside his salad bowl, sweating onto the tablecloth. After dinner, he and Tara loaded the dishwasher together, laughing, crashing plates around carelessly in a way that Edie or Prentice could never have gotten away with. Edie's mother had made a chocolate cake for dessert, but Tara and Claude insisted on frozen yogurt and took Granna's car to go get it. They were gone for an hour, and when they returned—the thump of the bass like a heavy heartbeat in the driveway once more—they'd forgotten the yogurt.

On the back porch, as they were leaving, Tara turned to Edie's father and said, "Didn't I see you down at the Holiday Inn lounge the other night?"

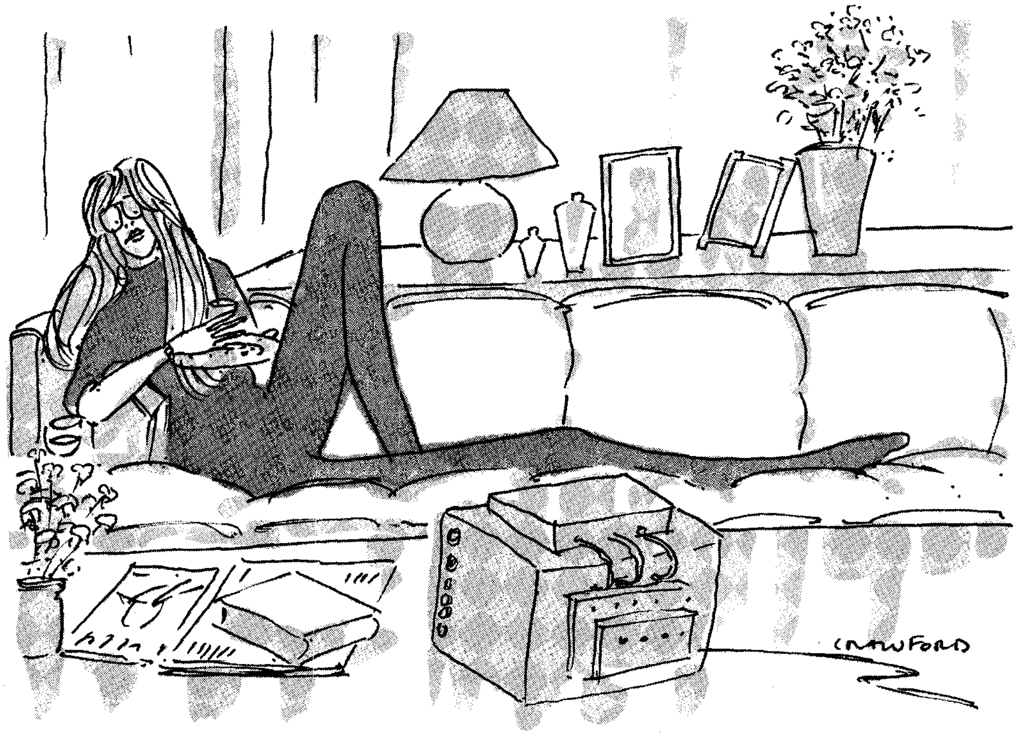
Edie's father said no.

"Oh, I thought I did," Tara said, grinning, tipping her head back to look through lowered lashes at Edie. "With a redhead."

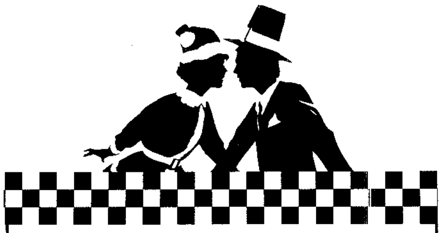
Edie hugged Granna good night, holding tight in case Tara and Claude wrecked the car on the way home and she never saw her grandmother again.

JUST after Easter, Edie caught mono from a boy she barely knew, and missed two weeks of school. They'd kissed at a party for the East High boys' swimming team. He was a senior, a diver named Mark Anthony. Edie knew there was something slick and ironic about his name, but she hadn't taken the time to research it yet. She enjoyed kissing, and he had been content to keep it at that, which made her like him all the more. A week later she felt sick.

When Edie was young her mother hadn't had a job, so whenever anyone stayed home ill, she was there to make soup, switch TV channels from one game show to another, heat or cool washcloths, read stories, or simply sit on the sickbed and sympathize. Her children's illnesses used to make Edie's mother mournful. Edie had liked that. Now her mother worked at the Department of Motor Vehicles, and Edie had to stay home alone, get her own aspirin. Her friends called at lunchtime to see if they could bring over their boyfriends and a couple of six-packs. Edie told them she expected her mother home early even though she didn't. Around three in the afternoon her mother called to find out how things were with Edie and



Supermodel Katrine enjoys a quiet moment alone with her legs.



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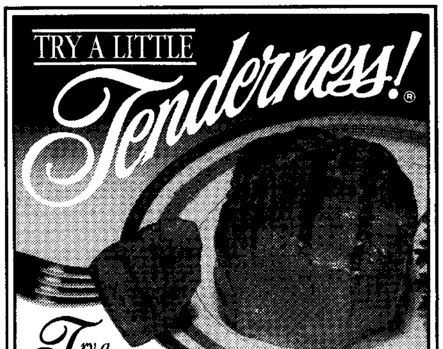
what they'd gotten in the mail. Bravely Edie talked, her throat sore, her feelings hurt.

Over Easter, Tara had moved away from her father's to Granna's house. Edie was lonely and would have called Granna, but she knew Tara would answer the phone. It made Edie furious, how Tara was taking advantage. She'd begun using Granna's car to go to bars, came home late, drunk, bringing men to stay with her in what had been Gransir's bedroom before he died. From Edie's mother Tara borrowed things and never returned them—sweaters, jewelry, shoes. If Edie mentioned them to her mother, her mother got annoyed. "Don't you have more important topics to occupy you?"

By herself in the house, Edie became curious. Her mother believed in privacy but Edie was a snoop. One morning she ransacked her mother's bathroom, looking for her birth control. Whatever they used, they'd hidden it well. Edie found nothing but an ancient electric massager, sitting in a drawer full of scarves, probably for her father's bad back. She switched it on and let it jiggle her hand for a while.

Ten days later, when she went back to school, she was hopelessly behind in all her classes, and Mark Anthony passed her in the halls without seeming to recall who she was.

A BLACK man named Mike Stubbs took care of Edie's family's yard. When he wasn't doing yards, Stubbs lived in the bus depot downtown. He had, thanks to Edie's parents, a small storage shed behind the Trailways building, containing gardening tools and a used golf cart that someone from the Wichita State Shocker Club had given him and that he drove from yard job to yard job. Sometimes Edie saw him putt-putting down Douglas Avenue, wearing wraparound shades. Edie's parents, especially her mother, had what Edie considered foolish faith in people's general goodness. Every Christmas for twenty years they had hung an enormous lighted peace symbol from the attic window, as if the drivers passing it might be inspired instead of amused. It was a rare moment when her father displayed his pessimism, as he had concerning Tara. Most often, they were busy doing the right thing, like hiring Stubbs, a home-



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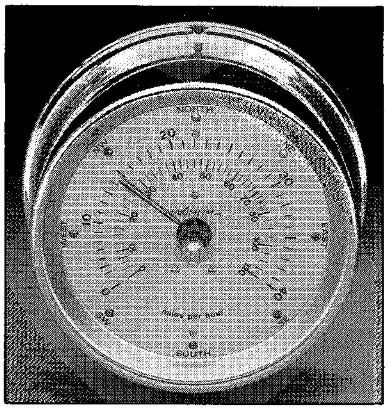

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less man, three years ago to bail pine needles from the drain gutters. Now this man felt he could give Edie advice.

"Smile," he ordered her on the first day of spring. He'd come over to prune roses. Someone was always telling Edie to smile, as if she didn't have a right to surly thoughts. She was also constantly given the baffling instruction "Be yourself."

"Why do I have to help him?" she'd yelled at her mother earlier. "What do we pay him for, if not to pick up our trash?"

Her mother had slapped her face. "Don't make me ashamed of you," she'd said, sending Edie to collect the winter's debris in the yard.

Theirs was a corner house, on two busy streets. Everyone threw litter into their yard—school papers, cheap-wine bottles, fast-food wrappers. Edie filled three grocery sacks with the limp, mulchy mess, still smarting from her mother's slap. She was popping bagworms—using her heel to press open their crusty little larva sacs, hoping this was the way to infest all the yard's trees—when she found a gun. It lay at the foot of a brown cypress in a nest of dead needles. She drew the gun out and held it in her palm, and was recalled suddenly to the peril everywhere around her.

"I wish I'd found that," Stubbs said when she handed it to him. "Wouldn't have showed you."

"You can have it," Edie told him.

He took the gun and banged it against his wrist; the cylinder fell open. Stubbs snapped it closed and looked left and right, then lifted the gun and pointed it at Edie's nose. She inhaled. Now wouldn't her mother regret trusting Stubbs, when she found Edie with her face blown off, lying here among the rest of the litter? Stubbs lowered the weapon, pinched open his loose, sweaty khakis, and fitted the gun into the hollow beneath his ribs. "Thank you," he said, patting it lightly.

Edie was furious with him for scaring her, furious with her mother for making her work with him, but what could she do? She wished now she'd kept the gun.

Around the block came the ice-cream truck, on this year's maiden voyage, its warbling tune ringing out. In her mind, Edie heard her mother's voice singing along—*Playmate, come out and play with me.*

"That thing is constantly going around our block," she told Stubbs peevishly.

"The driver makes deals in the park," he said. "I've seen him buying weed over there."

"Really?"

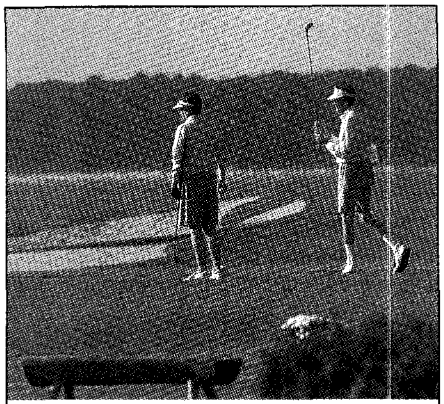
They listened to the tinkling tune grow loud and distorted as the vehicle passed, the driver lifting a hand to wave at them, then fade quickly as he rounded Second and headed toward Hillside.

"High as a fucking kite," Stubbs said, then added, "I think you ought not bring this gun thing up with your parents."

"Don't worry," Edie told him. The ice-cream song tinkled in Edie's brain like the soundtrack from a horror movie about psycho children with scythes. She felt full—to the point of nausea—of knowledge she couldn't do anything with.

EDIE made straight C's on her final report card. "Average," she told her parents, who merely looked sorry for her, not surprised; she wasn't like her brother and sister, who'd actually cared what grades they received, but neither were Edie's parents the same people they'd been back then. They didn't have the enthusiasm to push her the way they had pushed the two others, sitting at the kitchen table and suffering over logarithms or metaphors. Her cousin Tara had never finished school, she kept remembering with panic.

Summer brought the spreading malaise of humid hours. When she grew tired of lying in the sun, listening to FM radio, Edie decided to get a perm in her mousy, fine hair. One of her classmates' fathers was a hairdresser and offered discounts to his daughter's friends. Edie didn't think of herself as a friend but got a deal nonetheless. The daughter washed Edie's hair in a plastic sink that held her neck like a cattle yoke. A little girl—her classmate's sister, Edie guessed—chased a fly around the salon with a tea strainer. "I don't want to kill it," she kept wailing as she waved the strainer ineffectually over her head.



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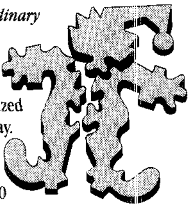

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The father had photographs from Washington, D.C., on his walls—pictures of himself with famous women newscasters from the early seventies. He'd been some kind of semi-celebrity back then; all the photos were signed by the women—"With love and gratitude," etc.

"Jessica's dead," his daughter told Edie, pointing at a smiling blond woman with Cleopatra eye makeup. "He did her hair for years."

Edie had no idea who the woman was; history besides her own lapped unknown around Edie like a dark sea. The father permed her hair in such a way that she couldn't really tell she'd had a perm. Somehow he'd made her hair simultaneously shrink and plump out, like the hair of a cheap doll. She'd imagined corkscrews falling wildly to her shoulders, but what she saw in the mirror was a blow-dried version of the same hairdo the women on the wall had, only brown instead of blond, coarse instead of sleek.

"I'm growing out my hair," she pleaded as the father snipped off some bangs.

"Get this fly away," he said to his daughters, ignoring Edie altogether. His girls giggled.

"You smell good, Papa," the older one said. "That's why he's bothering you." Her father waved his clippers at the fly.

Edie said, "I sort of like the natural look," but he'd already sprayed hairspray, lacquering everything solid.

When she paid, filling in the blank check her mother had given her, the fly landed beside her fanny pack on the counter. Despite the odds against it, Edie smashed him with a well-placed slap. She flicked him to the floor. The little sister was crying when Edie walked out.

FOR her summer project, Edie's mother decided to learn Spanish. "It's a crime not to know another language," she told Edie and her father at dinner, as if reprimanding them for not wishing to join her. Her class met every day for two weeks at the University and then flew to Mexico City for two more weeks, for field experience. For those last two weeks, Edie hardly saw her father. He took up smoking again—something he hadn't done since be-

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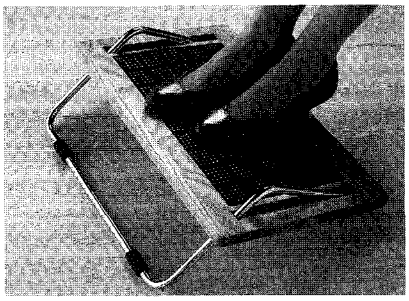

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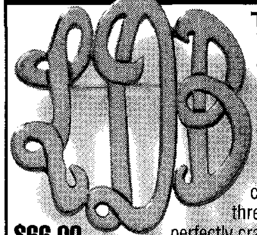

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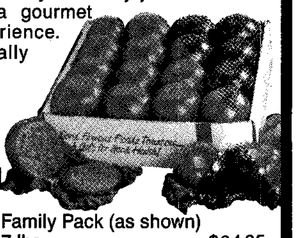

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fore he'd gotten married—and he slept in Prentice's room. Meanwhile, Edie was reading dirty books. These occupied an entire shelf in her father's study, resting there as if they were as innocent as "Bleak House" or "Jane Eyre." There were different types: sex a long time ago, sex between men and women, men and men, women and women, people alone, people being watched. Occasionally an animal was involved. There were virgin girls, thermometers, cucumbers, birch twigs, tongues, fingers, teeth. There were stories with a lot of driving around—in carriages or cars or trains—and getting hardly anywhere, and then there were stories that went straight to the point, again and again. Edie couldn't get over the books—their frankness, their effect on her. When her father disappeared in the early evening during the two weeks her mother was gone, Edie retreated to her bedroom, paperback in hand. She lay awake for hours, thinking, worrying, dazed and chagrined. In the morning she would slip downstairs, passing Prentice's closed bedroom door, her mother's and father's wide queen-size bed with its red-white-and-blue quilt undisturbed, and return the book she'd chosen to its place on the shelf.

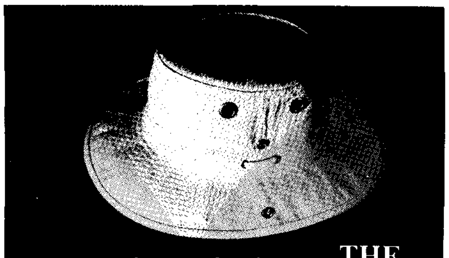
Edie spent the Fourth of July night at her grandmother's house. The two of them sat in La-Z-Boys watching reruns of "Murder, She Wrote," Granna's favorite show. They had cold cereal and low-sodium grapefruit soda for dinner. Afterward they played robin rummy and ate butter mints. Tara and Claude were out in the car. Edie called home just to hear the phone ring in the empty hallway. Her father hadn't told her where he would be. She kept picturing the little green Post-it notes her mother had attached to everything in the house: *la mesa, la silla, el teléfono.*

"Hosannah," Granna said at nine-thirty, "I'm a-whupped. Had an X-ray yesterday and I'm still worn out."

"An X-ray of what?"

"My liver, my spleen, my gizzard." Granna lifted herself daintily from her chair. She was big but always seemed light, like an air-filled sweet pastry, her skin dusted with powder. She walked tilted sideways, and Edie heard the bed in the next room sink as Granna sat on it.

In a few minutes, her grandmother called her. Edie found her in her



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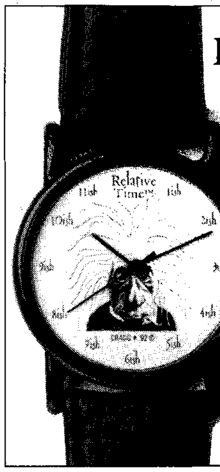

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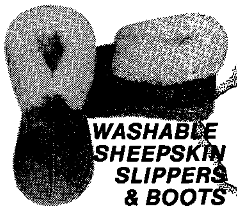

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underwear, still sitting on the bed.

"Hun-hun?" she said. "I need some help."

Edie located her summer muumuu, a thin, flowered garment smelling of lavender. Granna didn't stink, the way Edie's mother did—of Chanel No. 5 or Arrid. Granna smelled like a baby. She didn't even have to shave—hair just didn't grow on her legs or underarms. Edie sat beside her on the bed. Edie's mother always praised Granna for being so "chipper"—an expression that made Edie think of squirrels. She and Granna looked in the huge round vanity mirror at themselves. "I'm afraid I might be leaving this world," Granna told Edie's reflection.

Edie began to cry. Granna reached out as if for her hand but didn't seem to have the energy to take it. "I don't want you to tell your mother I had X-rays, you hear?"

"Why?"

Granna tipped over slowly away from Edie, resting her head on a pillow as if she might never lift it up again. "Oh, well, you know your mother," she said vaguely.

"Hmm," Edie said, curious for a moment about whether that was true. Then she added, "You should sleep." Granna lay limp on the bed while Edie worked the spread out from under her, rolling her grandmother's body side to side until she was beneath the sheets. She switched off the light as she went out. Outside she heard distant firecrackers, the *pop pop pop* like crossfire. A few hours later, while Edie was staring at music videos, Tara came home, banging the front door open into the back of Edie's chair.

"Eeds, Eeds, what's the story?"

"Be quiet. Granna's in bed. You reek."

Tara swung the front door closed. "I reek?"

"Where's Claude?"

Tara squinted at the TV over Edie's head. "You like them?"

Edie turned to watch four skinny guys in leather pants bend over and swing their long hair in circles like propellers as they played guitars and shouted. "I guess," she admitted.

"Oy." Tara headed for the kitchen, where she stood before the open refrigerator eating from a turkey carcass. However hateful Edie found Tara, it

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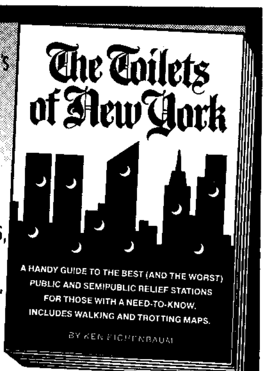

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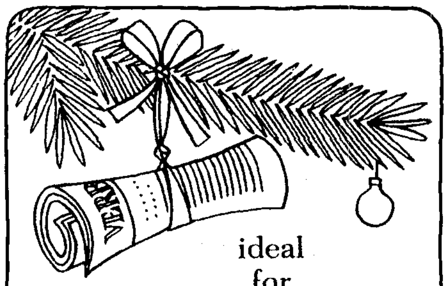

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was still good to have someone younger than Granna in the house. Edie had been afraid to go listen at Granna's door, afraid she might not hear breathing. Didn't people always die on holidays?

Now she followed Tara to the kitchen. "What's wrong with Granna?" she asked. "Why did she have an X-ray?"

"What's wrong with Granna is she's old. Old people get paranoid about every little thing. So her side aches? So does mine. It comes from laying around the house."

"Oh."

"Fucking Claude went up to Hutchinson."

"Why?"

"Because in Hutch you can score."

Tara brought out a jar of olives but couldn't get the lid unscrewed. "Those are really ancient," Edie told her. "Like fossils. I saw them here last year and the year before."

Tara put the jar back in the refrigerator.

"Aren't those my mom's boots?" Edie asked.

Tara looked from the lighted refrigerator to her feet. "So?" she said, glaring now at Edie. "Isn't that her ring?"

Edie grabbed her left hand; her mother's opal ring was on her pinkie.

Tara snorted, slamming the refrigerator door. The eggs rattled in their holder. "And guess what else, Edie?" Tara reached into her black purse and produced a Baggie full of something that looked like heavy silt and pieces of shells.

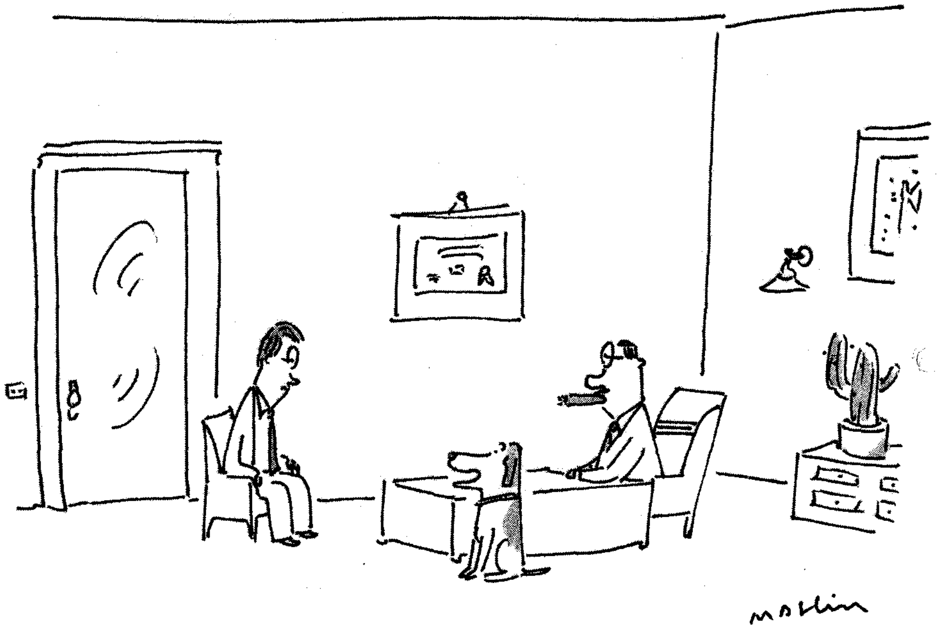
"What's that?"

"Ashes," Tara said. These would be her own mother's ashes—Edie's aunt Regina, who had died two years before, of cancer. They came from a blue-willow ginger jar, in Edie's mother's bedroom, on the mantel with everyone's school and wedding photos. Most alarming to Edie was the idea of Tara in her family's house when they were gone.

"Go ahead and tell your mother—I dare you," Tara said. She pushed past Edie and headed for the bathroom. "And be sure you tell her you saw me piss on them before I flushed them away."

The bathroom door closed, and a few minutes later water ran through the pipes. To Edie it had never seemed completely plausible that her aunt was in the ginger jar, that her mother could be emotional about the ashes. Still, the idea of flushing them away stunned her. All night she kept waking up on the couch, feverish from nightmares and images, worried that someone would walk through the living-room door, sit down on her, say something, do something.

ON the day her mother returned, Edie and her father cleaned. He threw away his rolling papers and tobacco pouch; Edie made her bed for the first time since her mother had



"I'm speaking to you now not as man's best friend but as your attorney's dog."

left. They opened windows and switched on ceiling fans. In her parents' bedroom, Edie opened the ginger jar and looked in. Half her aunt's ashes were still there. It was possible her mother would never notice. Together, she and her father cooked lasagna and French bread and listened to opera. Edie felt happy to be back to normal, to be a kid with parents.

At the airport, her mother arrived sunburned and smiling hysterically at Edie and her father, as if she hadn't smiled in weeks. She walked from the plane beside a dark-haired, bearded man who was earnestly telling her something.

"Who was that?" Edie's father asked as they left the airport. A suitcase hung from one of his hands and a garish woven basket stuffed with newspaper-wrapped curios from the other. Edie's mother was babbling away about what she'd brought them and appeared to have to think for a moment to figure out what her husband had asked.

"Oh—Luther," she said, dismissing him with a shake of her head. "He's a reporter at the *Eagle*, a very interesting man, but a little lonely."

"He seemed to like you," Edie's father commented.

"Oh, he's one of those people who need a nurturing older woman to listen to their woes." Edie was reminded of how her mother always had to categorize everybody—"one of those people who."

Luther was standing pathetically at the curb outside trying to hail the single taxicab that was waiting at the Wichita airport. Edie watched her father watch him, noting his perplexed frown. Her mother waved and shouted something in Spanish, to which Luther nodded, either grimacing or smiling.

"We could give him a ride," Edie offered, so content at having her mother home that she was trying to think like her.

"Oh," her mother said lightly, still walking, leaving Edie's idea behind her somewhere.

At the dinner table, Edie was allowed to drink champagne with her parents while her father served the food and her mother prattled on about her trip, inserting occasional Spanish words, her mouth working so hard at forming them that it was as if she were disgorging golf balls. Though the lasagna had scorched and was leathery, she complimented it a hundred times. Edie regretted help-

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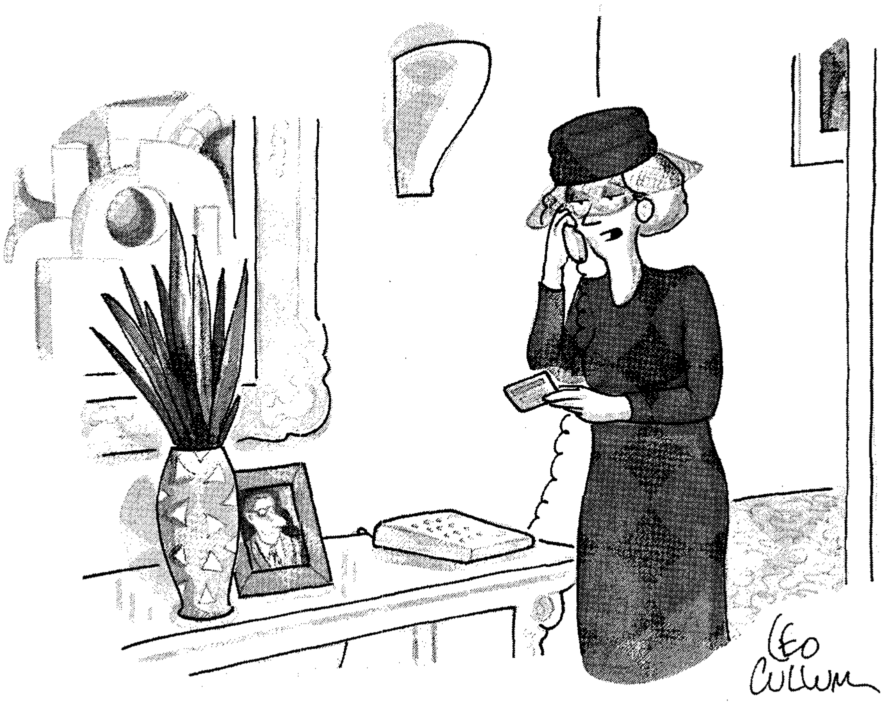


"No, it's my husband that's expired. Is his credit card still good?"

• •

ing her father hide the messiness they'd indulged in during her mother's absence. She wished the smell of smoke still lingered. She was on the verge of saying or asking something. She could feel her thoughts circling busily in her brain, crowded and confused, the champagne working like lubricant. But they were ugly things, her thoughts, like the many-legged insects that lived beneath rocks: you waited for them to scurry back into the darkness, out of sight. And her mother's eager face seemed directly responsible. As she herself might put it, she was one of those people who make their companions sour with their own sunniness.

On a muggy Sunday in August, Tara phoned to invite Edie to go see a movie with her. Edie hated Sundays; they reminded her of PMS. She felt fat and had acne all over her neck. Stores were closed and the mail didn't come. School was about to start again. Her father had once told her that Wichita sat smack in the middle of the Sunbelt and had three hundred and forty sunny days a year, but Edie didn't believe him—on Sundays it always rained.

"How about 'Elephant Man'?" Tara said. "It's only two bucks, over at the Crest. We could walk from your house."

"I'll go but I won't walk. Come get me." It had been a couple of years since Edie had gone to a movie with Tara; they'd seen "Fantasia," and Edie had made the mistake of telling Tara she looked exactly like the dancing ostrich.

Claude hadn't come back from Hutchinson. Tara had started going to A.A. meetings because she'd been picked up on a D.U.I. in Granna's car, and A.A. was the only way to keep her license. Since Claude had gone and she stopped drinking, she'd gained about twenty pounds. Edie preferred her fat. She preferred Tara as pathetic and grotesque as possible. At the theatre Edie bought a huge box of small Snickers bars and kept offering them to her, feeling pleasantly perverse as Tara tore open the little wrappers and bit into the chocolate. Just sitting here next to Tara was to indulge in a greasy kind of inertia.

"Oh, God," Edie said, suddenly bowing her head down.

"What?" Tara asked, looking around quickly, like a bird.

"That guy ahead of us, with the two daughters? He's the guy who gave me this shitty perm." The three of them sidestepped into a row four or five down from Tara and Edie.

Tara watched them for a while, then leaned back. "So what?"

Edie shrugged. "I just don't want to talk to them."

"You know what your hair looks like? Like a sweater you were supposed to Woolite." Tara laughed at her own joke. "How's your mom?"

"Fine," Edie said. This was an example of what Edie could never quite explain to her mother, the way Tara had asked about her. Her mother refused to understand *tone*, as if she were reading conversations instead of having them. Tara was really saying, "You didn't tell on me, you little gutless brat," and, more annoyingly, "I knew you wouldn't."

Edie chewed her Snickers.

Tara opened her black purse, which was the size of a small suitcase, and rifled the contents—scuffed-up compacts and lipsticks, hairy combs, linty Kleenex. "Lend me a couple bucks, will you?"

Edie sighed, lifting her rear to extract from her pocket the five that was left over from the ten-dollar bill her mother had given her for "going to the show," or, as she now put it, "*va a película*."

"Here," she said, handing the limp bill to Tara. Four rows ahead of her the hairdresser raised his arms like a vampire and dropped one on each of his daughters' shoulders. Edie couldn't help thinking this symbolized something depraved about his relationship with them. On the way to the theatre, she and Tara had passed Mike Stubbs on Douglas, driving his poky golf cart, looking quaint and harmless while he had a pistol packed under his belt.

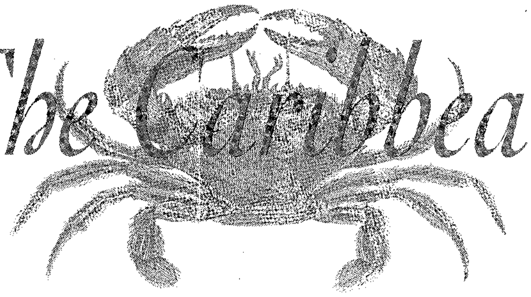
In a minute, Tara returned with her popcorn and Crush, and the theatre lights faded to black. There was a timing glitch, so everyone sat uneasily for a few seconds staring at the only source of light, a red "Exit" sign. Beside her cousin in the dark, Edie remembered the upstairs bedroom at Granna's and being on top of Tara, every now and then thrilling all over with a forbidden and frightening desire for what she understood to be very bad. She shook her head, shook it hard, imagining, as she did so, shaking her mother. She would begin with the five-dollar bill. She would take her mother by the shirtsleeves and shake the unbearable toothy smile right off her face and declare, gleefully, "No way in hell you're going to see that money again." ♦

Follow the Sun

All photos courtesy Tony Stone Worldwide.

Clockwise from above: Fruit is displayed at a market in Costa Rica; the saguaro cactus is abundant in Arizona's desert regions; in St. Lucia, artists stand in front of a mural; local schoolchildren in Aruba smile for the camera; Hamilton, Bermuda, is filled with colorful buildings.

To chase along the path of the sun is one sort of journey, more than incentive enough to shake off the doldrums. To make discoveries in the lands *under* the sun is another, wonderful, creative experience. From Bermuda to Barbados, Hawaii to Costa Rica, the rich heritage created by past civilizations has left its mark in the extraordinary architecture, customs, and cuisine of these sunstruck domains. And from those remarkable legacies the people of these lands have each developed characteristic traditions, their own unique flavors, that intensify a visitor's experience with regional music, dance, cuisine, and arts. And so, from east to west, these are just some of the treasures to be uncovered if you take wing and follow the sun.



The Caribbean

To begin, choose the route of Columbus, and you'll be rewarded with stops at the oldest forts, palaces, and churches in the Western Hemisphere.

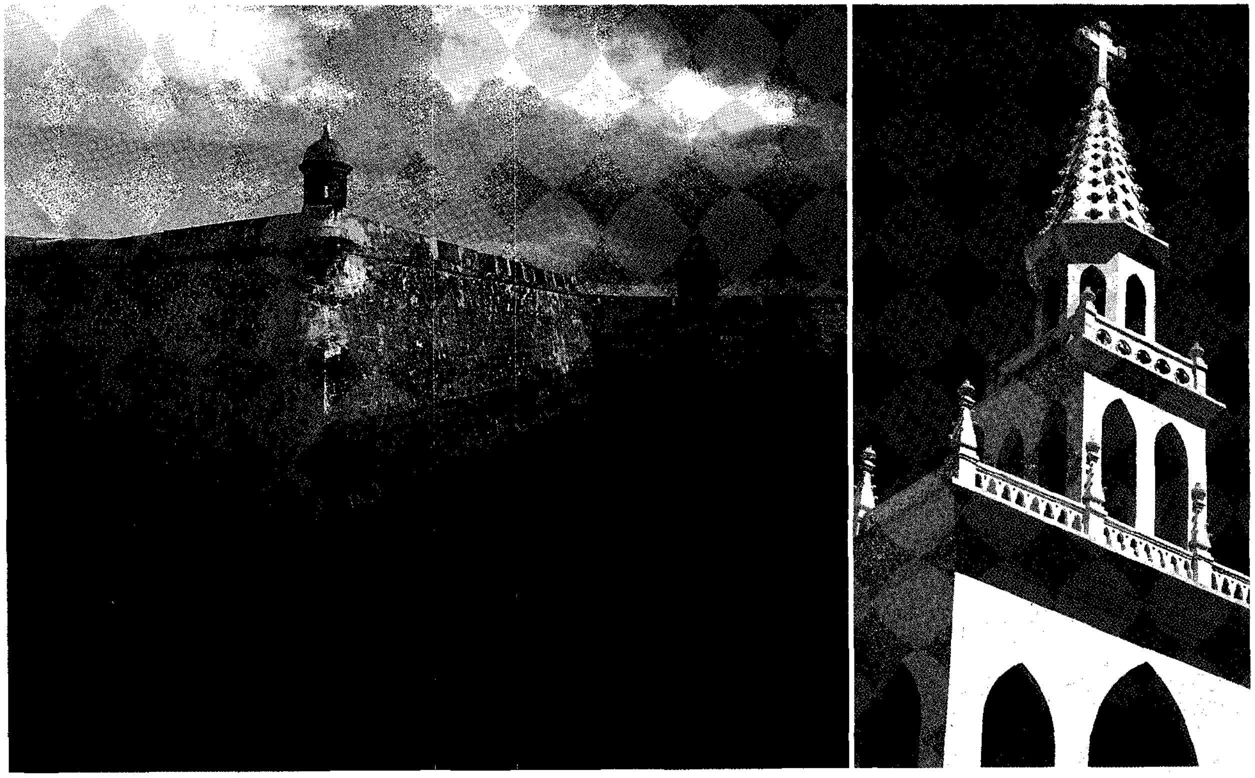
The much celebrated voyage of the *Nina, Pinta,* and *Santa Maria,* in 1492, was the first of four journeys Columbus would make as he claimed—and named—most of the Caribbean islands. The five hundredth anniversary of his first journey has sparked enormous interest in that saga and spurred historical-restoration efforts and the creation of new monuments.

San Juan, Puerto Rico, the oldest city under the American flag, marks the quincentenary in 1993 of Columbus' discovery of Puerto Rico, on his second voyage. The attractions of the deluxe resorts and clubs of this cosmopolitan city are situated quite close to the charms of Old San Juan. This seven-square-block historic district contains some eight hundred early Spanish buildings, including UNESCO World Heritage sites such as La Fortaleza, the governor's residence and oldest executive mansion still in use in this hemisphere, and El Morro, a massive fortress built to guard the harbor; construction on this structure began in 1540.

1995 marks the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of Puerto Rico.

The waterfront here, where Spanish galleons once sailed, is being transformed. La Princesa, an eighteenth-century prison, has recently been restored as the historic headquarters for the Puerto Rico Tourism Company. The Paseo de la Princesa, where Spanish colonial gentry strolled, is regal once again; this wide brick walkway, shaded with royal palms, sweeps toward the cruise-line piers. A new square, called Quincentennial Plaza, opens this fall, connecting with San José Plaza and El Morro to form a three-tier open space studded with sculptures.

Columbus came to the island of Hispaniola on his first voyage, landing on what is now known as the Dominican Republic, and that event has been commemorated with a new forty-million-dollar monument and cultural center, the Columbus Lighthouse. The tower stands in Santo Domingo, the city that became the Spanish capital of the New World for a full century and served as the base of operations from which Cortes, Velazquez, and Ponce de Leon planned their conquests.



San Juan's El Morro Fortress defends the harbor; the city's heritage is evident in its architecture.

Even the most modest of history lessons tell us that the Spanish did not have the Caribbean to themselves for very long. The British, French, Dutch, and Scandinavians soon arrived, eager to share the wealth. Where each culture prevailed, an obvious impression remains, but none quite so deep as that in Willemstad, the capital of Curaçao, a veritable pastel Amsterdam transplanted to balmy climes.

In 1634, the Spanish were ousted from Curaçao, and the fine natural harbor there became the major trading base for the powerful Dutch West India Company. Twenty-six-

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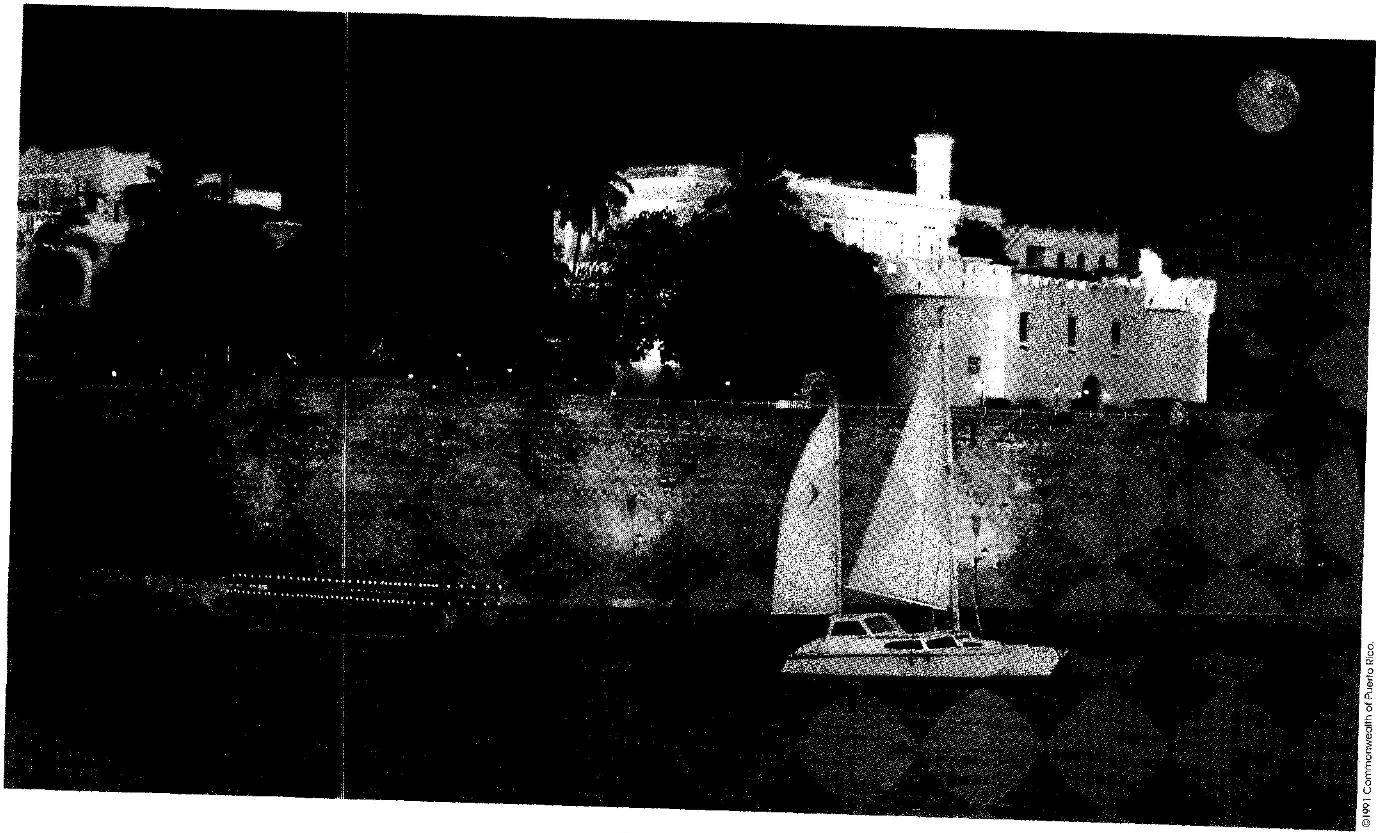

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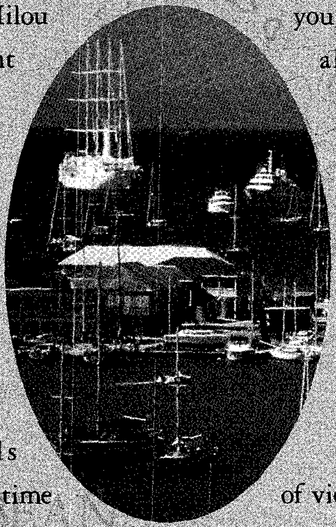

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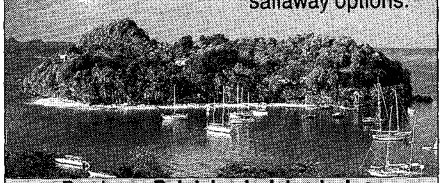

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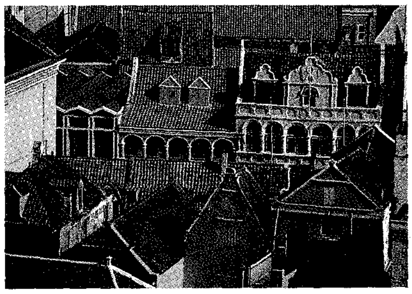
year-old Peter Stuyvesant was sent to govern the island in 1642 before he moved on to Niew Amsterdam. (It was on an expedition from Curaçao to claim St. Maarten for the Dutch that Stuyvesant lost his right leg to Spanish gunfire.)

The Dutch tried to recreate their home architecture here, and the gabled "gingerbread" buildings along the harborfront continue to charm visitors today as much as they surely did their original inhabitants. The plantation homes in the countryside also show a distinct Dutch influence.

On Dutch Aruba, history has a different twist. The Spanish dubbed it an "isla inutil," a useless island, and used it as a place to raise cattle. Once the Dutch took over the island, they, too, bred cattle and horses there. In the nineteenth century, many Venezuelans began to call the island home. As a result of this cultural mix, native Arubans are a blend of many races, a fact reflected in their unofficial language, Papiamento, a merging of Indian, Spanish, and Dutch.

The third and smallest of the Dutch Antilles, Bonaire, is a diver's paradise. The whole island is a coral reef twenty-four miles long and five miles wide, but you don't even have to get wet to enjoy the salt-water riches. Just toss a bread crust from a seaside terrace and watch as a living Technicolor aquarium arrives on cue.

Among the smaller Dutch islands, Saba is best known for its unique topography (it's a cone-shaped mountain with the island's only road zigzagging up and down) and for its Artisans' Foundation, where fine needlework and silk-screened fabrics are produced. St. Eustatius, a small island usually dubbed, simply, Statia, was devastated in 1781. In 1776, its Fort Oranje was the first foreign port to salute a ship flying the new United States flag. Five years later the British sacked



The Dutch are responsible for Curaçao's charming gabled buildings.

Oranjestad, the island's capital, in revenge. Recent restorations are beginning to bring back the old structures.

And then there is Dutch St. Maarten, a favorite resort retreat, cruise-ship port, and jumping-off point for many other Caribbean islands. Its main claim to fame is that each half of the island is under a different national flag: the French and Dutch have peacefully co-existed here for more than a century and a half. In Philipsburg, the capital of the more developed Dutch side, the two-hundred-year-old courthouse is surrounded by scores of restaurants and duty-free shops. The tiny French capital of Marigot offers boutiques, perfumeries, and a host of French cafés.

The French flag flies alone over Martinique, Guadeloupe, and St. Barts, islands that share the Gallic flair for food, wine, and fashion.

The French arrived on Martinique in 1635, and the island is a full region of France, with voting rights and representation in Parliament for its citizens. Shops in Fort-de-France are stocked with French goods; Balata Church is a twin of the Sacre-Coeur.

Martinique's museums mark some unique bits of the island's history. One is the La Pagerie, the birthplace of Empress Josephine, and another is the Centre d'Art Paul Gauguin, which reflects the artist's sojourn on the island. Yet another museum on Martinque concerns itself with the story of St. Pierre, a city once known as the Paris of the Caribbean; St. Pierre was completely buried in 1902 by the eruption of the volcano Mount Pelee.

Guadeloupe, also a region of France, has a more West Indian character than does Martinique. The pride of the island is its creole cooking, which is celebrated with the annual Fete des Cuisinieres, the Cooks' Festival, held on the second Saturday in August.

At an outdoor market in Guadeloupe, a woman purchases necessities; on Martinique, a young girl poses with the island's bounty.

The lush landscape of Guadeloupe, dotted with archeological sites, also makes this island a favorite of hikers. One interesting site to seek out is the Monument to Liberty,

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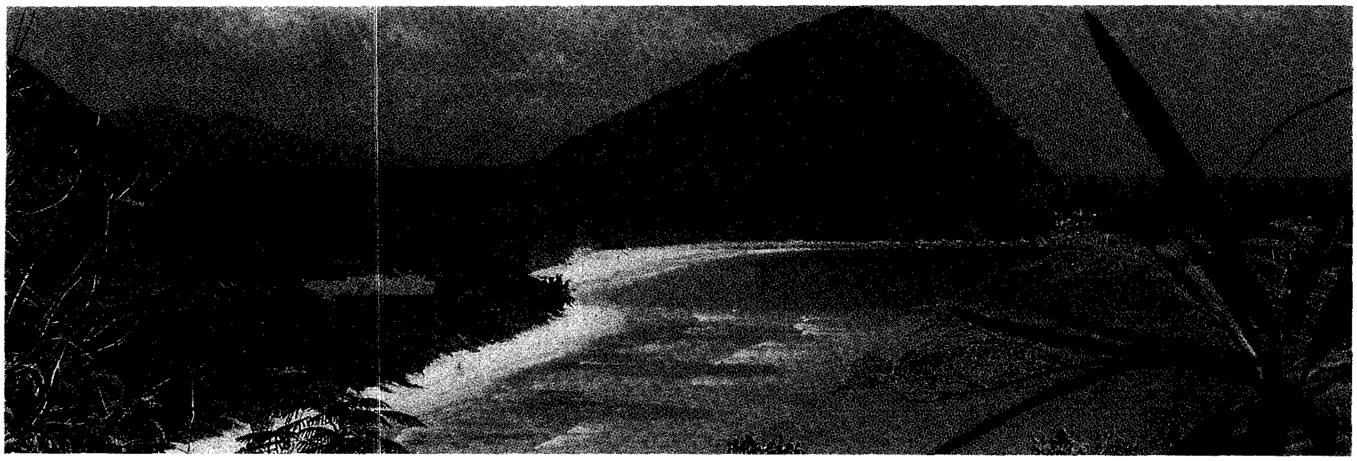

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on Petit Canal. The monument is at the head of fifty-three steps, with each step representing one of the plantations that once flourished on the island.

In Haiti, African and French influences blend, as evidenced in the colorful primitive art that is offered in galleries and by sidewalk artists throughout Port-au-Prince. On a remote Haitian mountaintop, three thousand feet above the sea, stands one of the most amazing buildings in the Caribbean: the Citadelle, a massive, seemingly impregnable fort, the building of which cost the lives of twenty thousand workers.

St. Barts, currently a favorite of the jet set, has an unusual heritage. Many islanders are descendants of the original settlers from Normandy and Brittany, and some of the elderly ladies can still be seen in the village of Corossol wearing traditional, Old World white bonnets. In 1784, however, islanders learned that their land had been traded to Sweden in exchange for port rights. The capital was rechristened Gustavia, and it became a prosperous free port. French governance returned in 1878, but Swedish influence still shows in buildings such as the Town Hall and the old Clock Tower.

The Virgin Islands of the United States might also be Scandinavian had it not been for World War I. The Danes reigned here from the 1600s until 1917, when America purchased the islands to protect against their possible use as enemy submarine bases.

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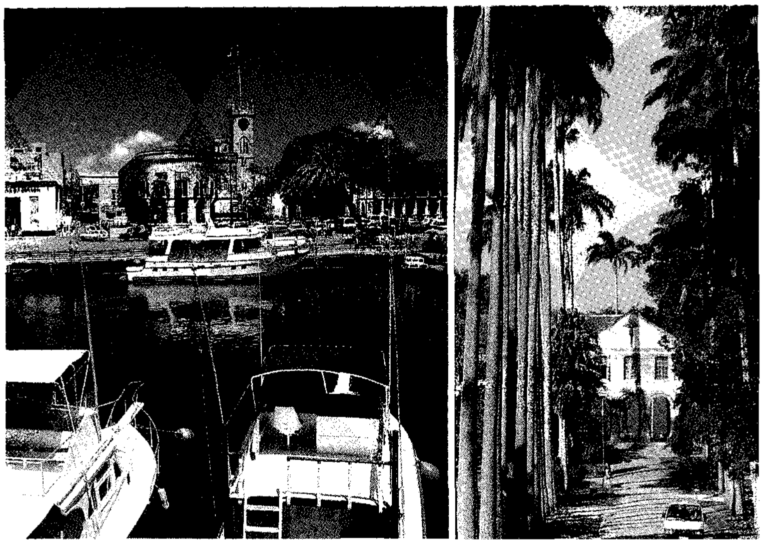
Along the harbor in St. Thomas, old warehouses now accommodate duty-free shops.

The main historic districts of Charlotte Amalie, on St. Thomas, and Christiansted and Frederiksted, on St. Croix, were renovated in time for the United States bicentennial, in 1976. Handsome eighteenth-century buildings form the heart of Christiansted, a town named for a Danish king, and, at the museum in the Steeple Building (a former Lutheran church) you can see how things used to be: there's a diorama of the town in 1800 and photos of the historic Danish architecture. A Danish guardhouse still stands at the foot of the stairs to Government House, the former residence of the Danish governor. The sugar mills and ruins at Judith's Fancy and the beautifully restored Whim Great House are more reminders of Danish days on a beach-rimmed island whose gentle landscape is now home to some stunning golf courses.

St. John remains the most pristine of all the U.S. Virgin Islands. Much of it has been preserved as a national park, which includes a spectacular underwater trail at Trunk Bay where visitors can snorkel along coral reefs.

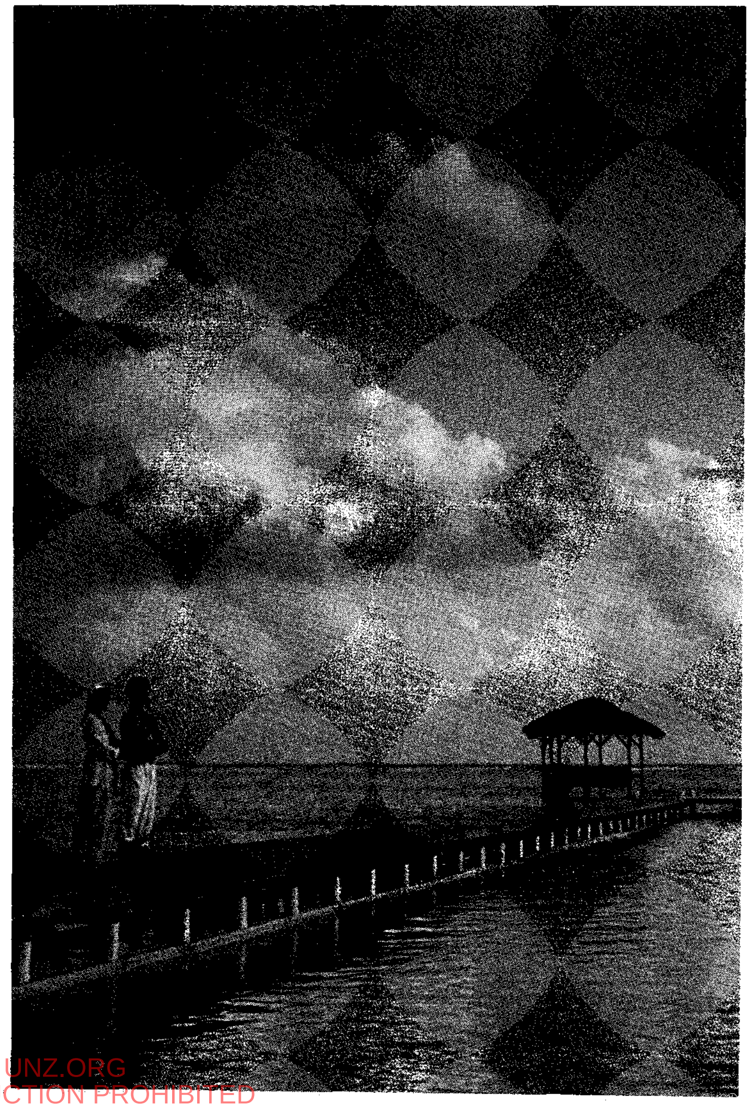
Britannia ruled not only the waves but also a large number of islands in the Caribbean, and many still bear a strong English imprint. In Barbados, for example, afternoon tea is a time-honored ritual and cricket is the national sport. Bridgetown's Trafalgar Square comes complete with a statue of Lord Nelson, and the island's green hilly section is known as Scotland.

Bajans, as the inhabitants are called, also share the British passion for preservation, and visitors can enjoy the fruits of that obsession by visiting some of the finest houses of the sugar-plantation era. Start with the three-hundred-year-old Sunbury Plantation House, or the St. Nicholas Abbey, a Jacobean-style mansion built in 1650.



Bridgetown is the commercial port of Barbados; an avenue of palm trees leads to Collingham House.

While other islands avidly sought independence, little Anguilla was demonstrating to remain a British colony in order to preserve its prized tranquility. Columbus gave the island its name, which translates to "eel," when he sailed by the long skinny body of land. Along that serpentine coast are nearly three dozen superb beaches, some of them



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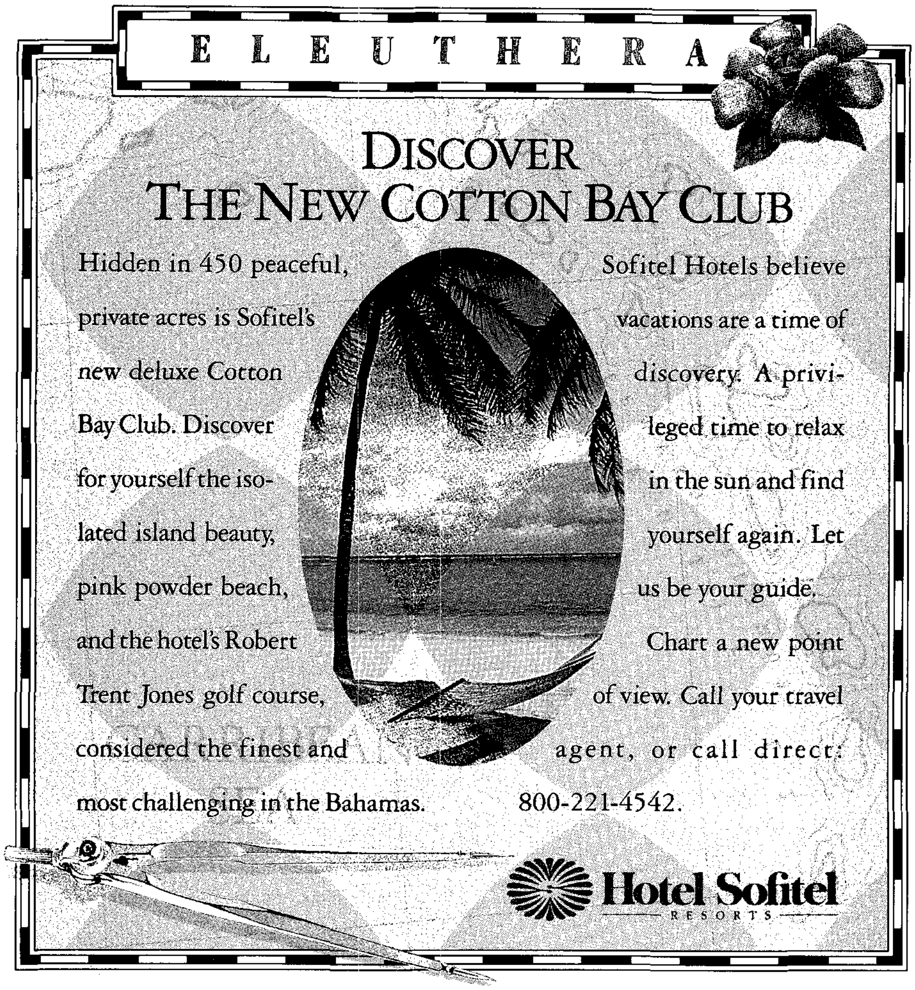
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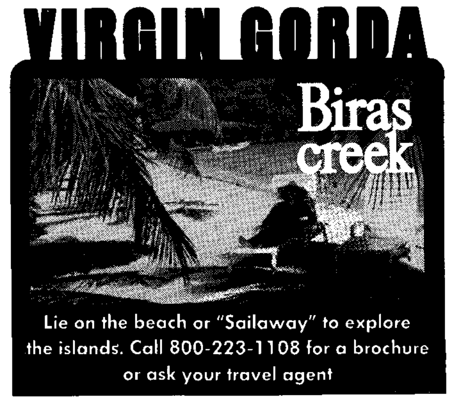
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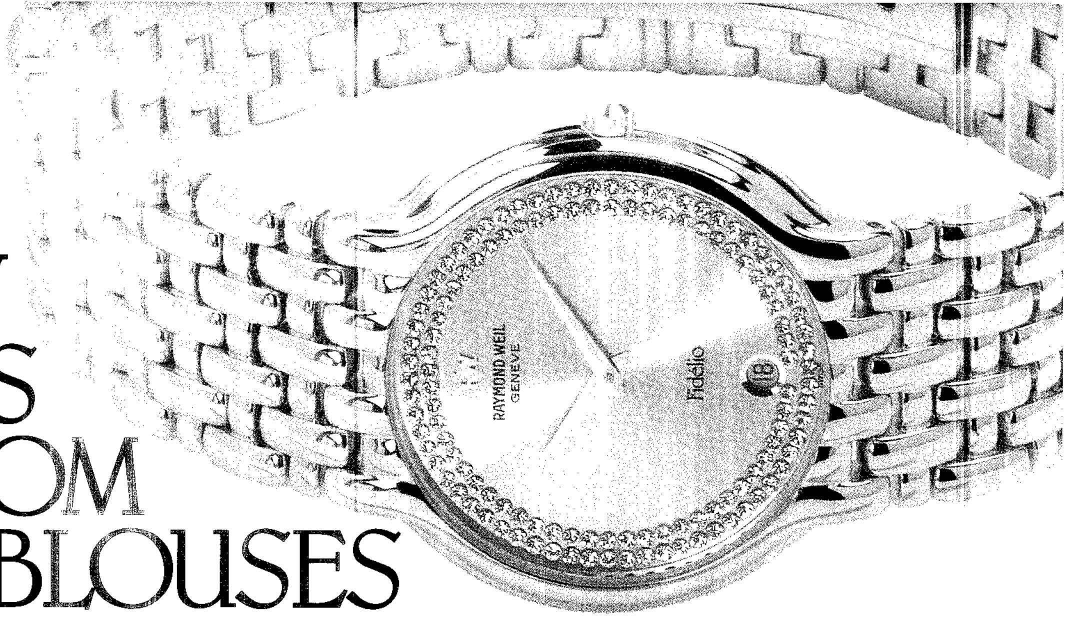
The Cayman Islands also chose to remain a Crown Colony, and a wealthy one at that, thanks to tax laws that make it a haven for corporations, which keep more than five hundred local banks hopping. According to island lore, King George III abolished taxes for residents after they rescued British seamen from an ill-fated convoy that ran into an offshore reef in 1788.

Seven Mile Beach, on Grand Cayman, is one of the Caribbean's most beautiful beaches.

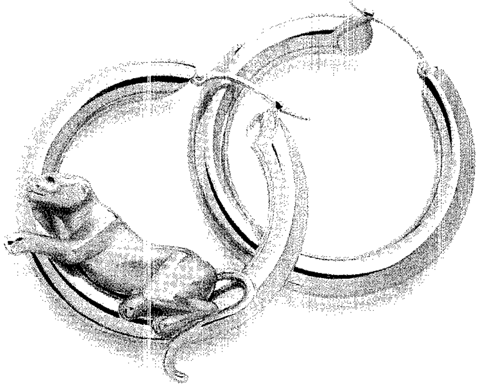
The Cayman waters were a favorite haunt of pirates, including Edward Teach, the notorious Blackbeard, and pirate tales abound along with legends of buried treasure. The treasures that bring visitors today, though, are the expansive sands, such as Seven Mile Beach, and some of the best diving sites in the world.

Today, the treasures that bring visitors to the Cayman Islands are its beautiful beaches and premier dive destinations.

Pirates used to ply the waters around the British Virgin Islands, as well. This was the territory that Robert Louis Stevenson wrote about in "Treasure Island," but now it is yachtsmen who cruise in these prized sailing waters. Plentiful charters and supplies available on Tortola make the sailing easy. These are quiet islands, but they have their share of



"MY SHOES COME FROM ITALY, MY BLOUSES FROM FRANCE, AND MY WATCH AND JEWELRY FROM LITTLE SWITZERLAND IN THE CARIBBEAN."



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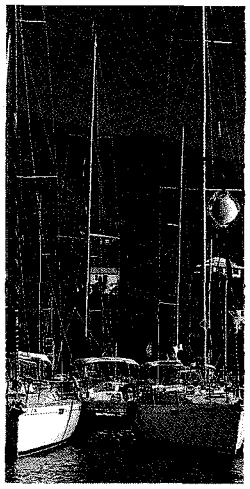
history. Among the exhibits in the Virgin Islands Folk Museum, in Tortola's Road Town, are pre-Columbian Arawak Indian artifacts, photos of the island's oldest dwellings, antique furnishings, and items salvaged from shipwrecks such as the H.M.S. *Nymph*, an English ship that sank in 1783, and the *Rhone*, a mail steamer that went down in 1867.



Tortola offers plentiful charter and prized sailing waters.

Antigua's English Harbour became the main British naval base in the eastern Caribbean and played an important role in Britain's mastery of the seas. It became known as Nelson's Dockyard, named for Lord Horatio Nelson, who was commander from 1784 to 1787. Now used by sailors out for a cruise rather than a conquest, the harbor has been carefully restored. The past is also preserved in the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda, housed in the old courthouse, built in 1750, in St. Johns. Exhibits range from a wattle-and-daub house model to hands-on computers that answer questions about sports, culture, and island historic sites.

St. Lucia seesawed between British and French rule at least ten times before the English finally triumphed once and for all in 1803, and that historical back-and-forth accounts for the French patois in the local speech. The extraordinary beauty of this island inspired the creation of an art colony here; seek out La Gallierie de la Porte Norie upstairs in the Alliance Francaise building to see current work from the artists who work there.

St. Lucia is dominated by the Pitons and Canaries Mountain.

On a practical note, a new jetport on St. Lucia makes this island's seascapes more accessible than ever.

On Antigua, spices are on sale at the local produce market.

Dominica also retains a strong French accent and a definite pride in its Creole heritage, clearly seen when islanders don the traditional long costumes known as the Jupe and the Robe Douliette, both made of colorful cottons. Also found here is one of the few true Carib Indian reserves, where traditional arts such as basketmaking and crafting dugout canoes are still practiced; the church in Salibia has an altar fashioned from a canoe. The island of Dominica also attracts many nature lovers to its untamed landscapes.

St. Kitts was Britain's first West Indian colony, and the massive forty-acre fortress begun on Brimstone Hill in 1690 has been carefully maintained, along with many of the old sugar-plantation houses. On neighboring Nevis, you can stay in plantation houses that have been converted to hotels, and visit the Bath Hotel and Spring House, a fashionable eighteenth-century spa. Two museums of note here are the Nelson Museum, dedicated to the admiral who married a Nevis native, and the Hamilton Museum, a Georgian-style building recently constructed on the site where American patriot Alexander Hamilton was born. Exhibits portray island history as well as Hamilton's life.

Britain's other isle, Montserrat, has steep hills and dales that are often compared to Ireland's. As it happens, the first settlers here actually were Irish, which accounts for the island's emblem: the shamrock.

While many islands retain the influence of other cultures, some have developed a distinctive essence of their own.

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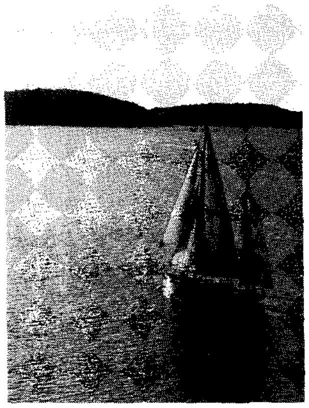

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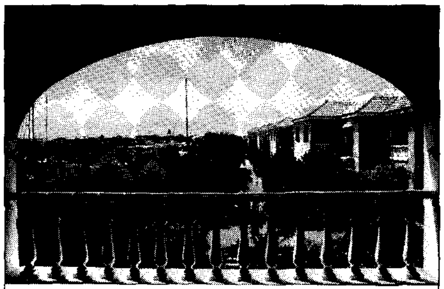

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In Jamaica, a woman dances in full costume.

poster country, with its blue-green mountains, white-sand beaches, alluring waterfalls, lush vegetation, and beautifully preserved "great houses." The island is also a nation with a beat all its own, embodied in the infectious rhythm of reggae, celebrated each year at a renowned summer festival.

Jamaica has developed a strong native culture in many artistic fields and has its own national dance company, theatre, pantomime troupe, and choral group. In Kingston, the National Gallery of Art highlights work by island artists from the seventeenth century to the present, and the National Crafts Institute of Jamaica is a contemporary training center for all of the arts.

Trinidad has been under French, Dutch, and British rule, as can be perceived in the varied styles of architecture found here, but the influence that is strongest comes from Africans, who first came here as slaves. This is the island where calypso is king, with the liveliest, most famous carnival in the Caribbean. Tobago, a smaller sister island just twenty-two miles away, provides a perfect counterpoint, with serene rolling hills and uncrowded beaches.

Grenada has built a mystique all its own as the lush "Isle of Spice," known for fine cuisine seasoned with local spices such as ginger, nutmeg, and mace. St. Vincent, a laid-back sailors' haven sometimes known as the "Tahiti of the Caribbean," and the surrounding Grenadines (nearly six hundred small islands) remain beautifully unspoiled.

The Turks and Caicos have made recent claim to being Columbus' first discovery, thanks to recent research by Caribbean historian Bretie Sadler, who puts the first landing point at Grand Turk, the northernmost island of the Turks group. These islands are just being discovered by many tourists, who appreciate the nearly private beaches and spectacular coral reefs.

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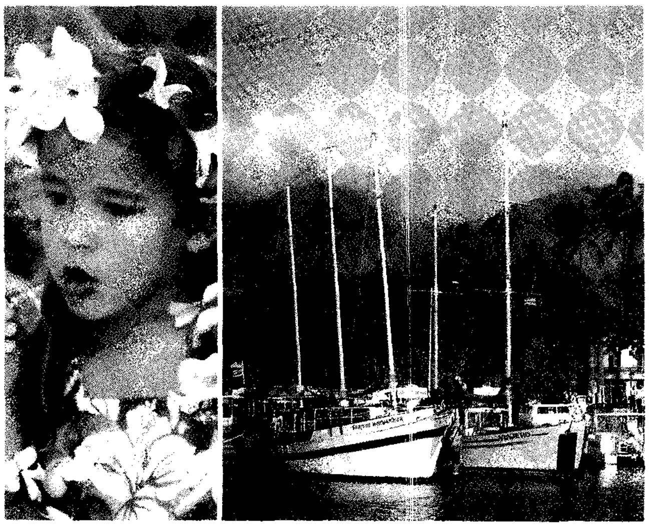
The Bahamas and Bermuda

It is the little-heralded Bahaman out island of San Salvador that is popularly accepted as the place where Christopher Columbus made his first landfall, and, consequently, this is San Salvador's year in the spotlight. Guanahani Landfall Park, a twenty-five-acre historic and recreational park on Long Bay, was dedicated on October 12, 1992. It includes a small museum and a replica of the kind of Lucayan village that Columbus might have found when he landed.

Beginning just fifty miles from Florida (which is a place you can go to just for the sun), the Bahamas chain, seven hundred islands and cays between the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, is close enough for a weekend jaunt, so it's no wonder that this is the most frequently visited destination in the tropics. Some travellers come to escape to the out islands, others to enjoy the mix of British heritage and new luxury hotels that dot Nassau and its resort areas of Cable Beach and Paradise Island.



Hawaiian children learn the ancient steps of their ancestors; on Maui, boats are moored in Lahaina Harbor.

Bermuda, England's more northern Atlantic outpost, had its first permanent settlement in 1612. By the time the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, in 1620, this island already had a well-established church, a fort, and a state house in St. George. Fort St. Catherine offers dioramas of the past along with replicas of the crown jewels; St. Peter's Church is the oldest Anglican church in the Western Hemisphere. Modern Bermuda is known for its pink beaches and superb golf, but there's no mistaking the heritage when you see the pubs, the shops in Hamilton stocked with Scottish tartan plaids and cashmere, cars driving on the left, and traffic policemen wearing Bermuda shorts and English bobby hats.

America's Southwest

For American resorts with a Spanish accent head to the Pacific, to California. Travellers can bask on San Diego's beaches and then visit some of the missions established by the Spaniards in the eighteenth century. Or take to the sunshine in the exhilarating desert air of Palm Springs, or further inland amid Arizona's tall-cactus country in Phoenix and Tucson, where some of the great resorts reflect a history that began with the Spanish and later took on the flavor of the Old West. In Arizona, the pottery, weaving, jewelry, and other crafts of the Navajos and other Southwestern American Indian tribes offer a glimpse into those fascinating cultures.

Cuisine influenced by old Mexico and new California is also part of the pleasure of a visit here.

Hawaii

Hawaii has retained much of the spirit of its Polynesian past. Purists in search of the old, unchanged Hawaii might seek their places in the sun on the island of Lanai, the last of the main islands to be settled. It was until quite recently known as the pineapple island, concerned with little except its fields of the sweet, spiny fruit. The fields are still there, but they have recently been joined by secluded resorts that give the best of both worlds: a totally unspoiled island with all the creature comforts.

Hawaii's plantation culture also lives on at Hana, on the island of Maui, where the only resort is built in the style of the cottages of the ranch that once stood on the site.

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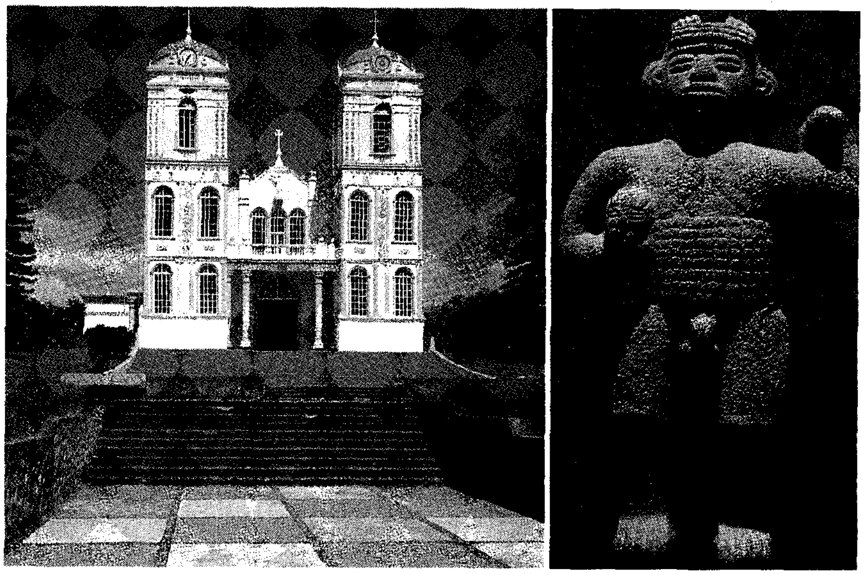

A brightly painted church stands out in Sarchí, Costa Rica; San José's museums house many pre-Columbian artifacts.

Perched on the island's rugged lava coastline, whipped by the sea, Hana is for romantics, especially those who want their romance with a dash of excitement.

Hawaii has an abundance of beautiful spots, each with its own enchanting history. The entire island of Kauai is a verdant green garden rimmed with beaches and dotted with ancient temples, called *heiau.* The sunny Kona coast of the Big Island of Hawaii is where the first missionary packet landed. The 112-foot steeple of Mokuaikaua Church, the first Christian church in the islands, has been a landmark for travellers since 1828. Near the north end of Kailua is the Ahuena Heiau, an ancient temple restored by the great King Kamehameha, who came to Kona to spend the last years of his life. It was here on this ancient site that the king's son sat down with Queens Keopuolani and Kaahumanu, breaking the ancient ban on eating with women and changing the old order forever.

Costa Rica

Columbus' fourth and final expedition in the Caribbean took him all the way to Central America. He bestowed the name Costa Rica (meaning rich coast) on the land he "discovered" because he saw natives wearing gold decorations. Two favorite settings in Costa Rica's cosmopolitan capital, San José, reflect this prosperous tradition: the Gold Museum and the Jade Museum, which houses a collection of impressive pre-Columbian artifacts and American jade.

Equally impressive, particularly to nature lovers, is the country's vast variety of flora and fauna. There are more than two hundred species of mammals and 850 kinds of birds, including the fabulous quetzal, exotic parrots, toucans, storks, and a profusion of other tropical show-offs.

Nearly twelve per cent of Costa Rica's land is set aside for its national park system, making it one of the most advanced systems in Latin America. The country has thirty-four national parks, wildlife refuges, biological reserves, monuments, and recreational areas. Some of the best-known national parks and best places to see wildlife are Corcovado, on the Osa Peninsula, Manuel Antonio, on the Pacific coast, and Tortuguero, on the northeastern coast. Two of Central America's active volcanoes can be seen in Costa Rica's Poás and Irazú national parks; Irazú, whose last major eruption was in 1963, is the highest volcano among many in the country.

For visitors looking for a little rest and relaxation, Costa Rica's hundreds of beaches are a top draw. The beaches, with red, yellow, black, or white sand, offer recreational activities from swimming to surfing. For those who still want to commune with nature, observe the sea turtles as they come ashore to lay their eggs.

Eleanor Berman is the author of the series *Away for the Weekend* and a contributor to *Caribbean Hideaways.*

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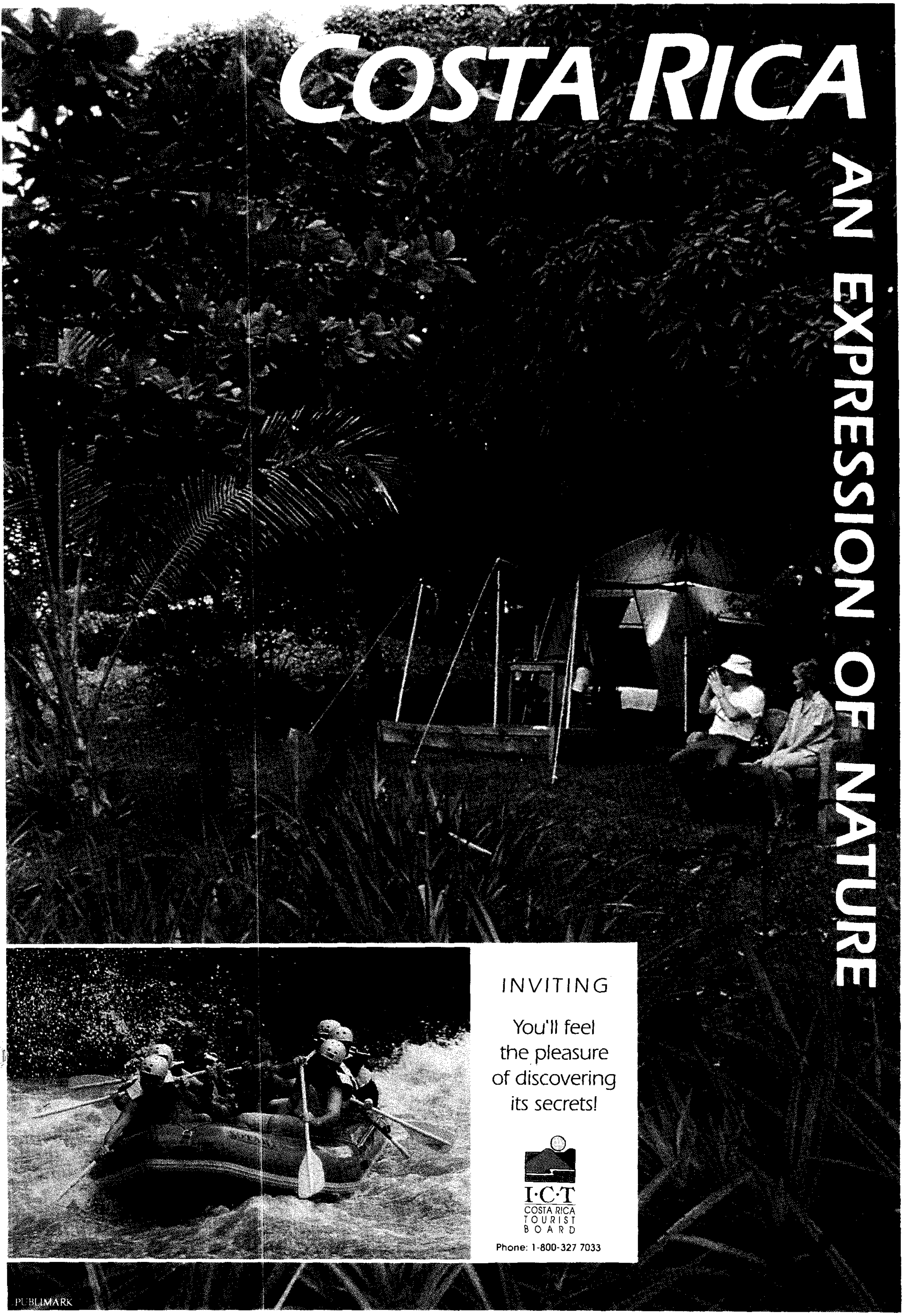

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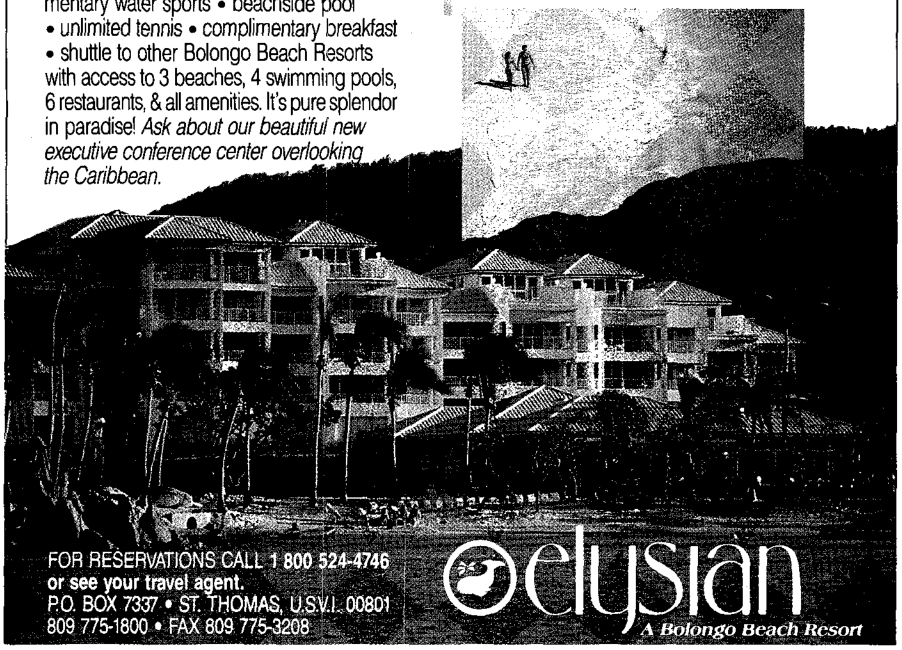

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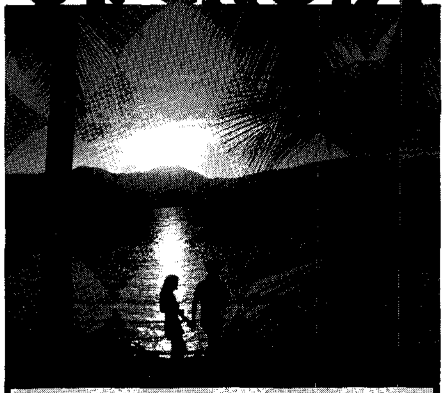

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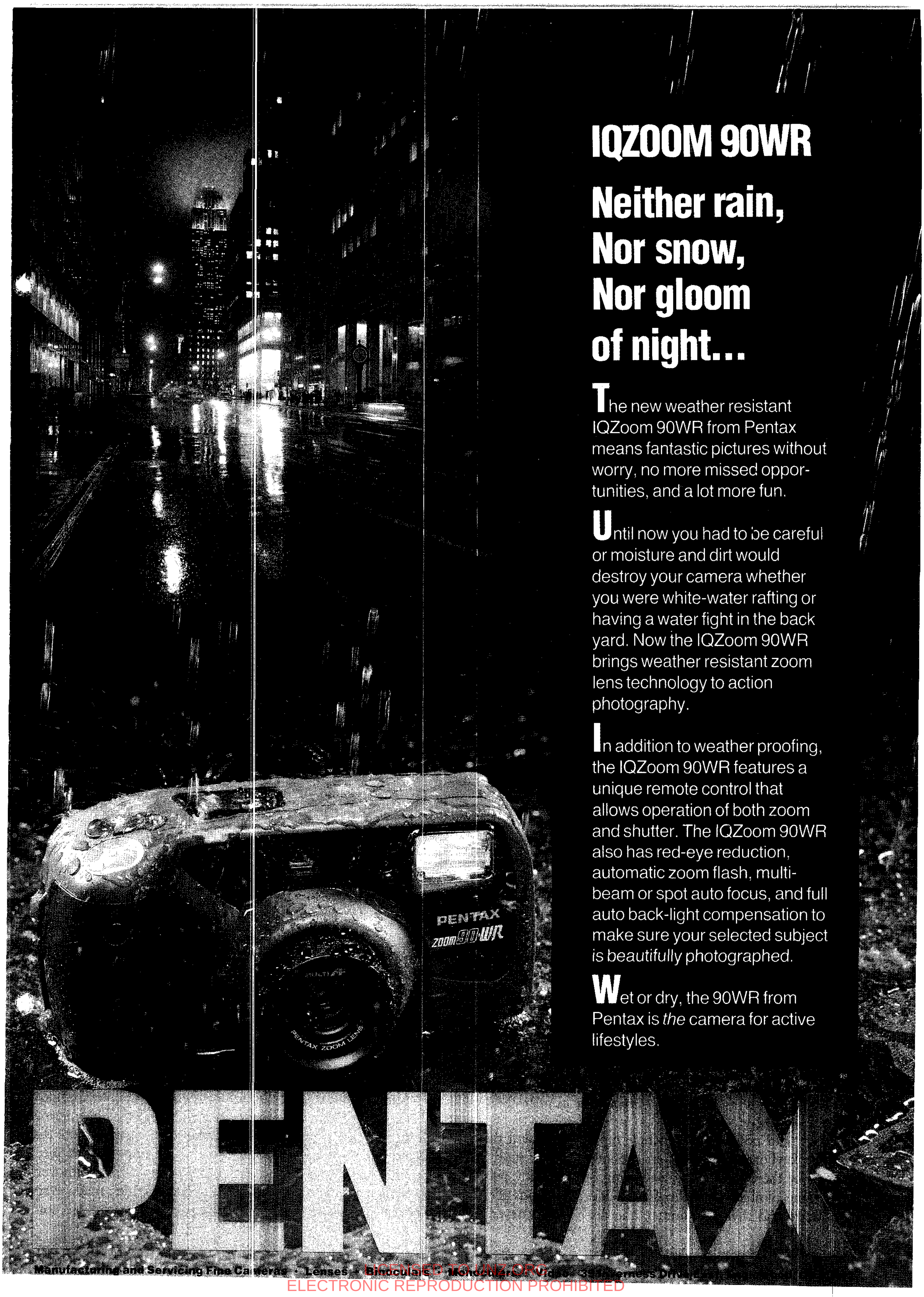

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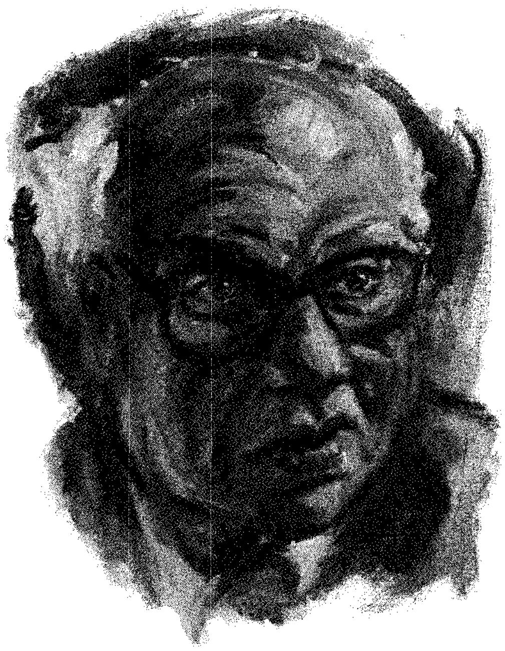
THE CRITICS

MUSICAL EVENTS

TWELVE TONES WITH TEN FINGERS

by Paul Griffiths

ONE of those old mental lazinesses is the antithesis of virtuosity to substance, as if the word "showiness" were always shadowed by an admonitory "mere." The music of Milton Babbitt and the piano playing of Robert Taub both provide stringent correctives, and it's not surprising that the two—though a long generation apart in age—should have become musical blood brothers.



Milton Babbitt: As limber an imaginer as ever.

KRAWCZYK

Mr. Taub's recital at Merkin Hall last month included the New York première of "Preludes, Interludes, and Postlude," which is the fourth big solo piece Babbitt has written for him within the past decade. It's music that shows the sort of accomplishment the composer has come to expect from his chosen performer, and the performer from his composer: an agile flickering of notes over the whole range of the keyboard, especially in the later stages of the composition; a running of the same nimble pulse through changes of metre and rhythmic unit; a fine discrimination of volume levels; and a care for tempo changes, even where the shift is only a nuance. This is music for someone who can play the most transcendental Liszt or the subtlest Debussy, and preferably both at the same time. But it's music, too, with the bone of Bach, and what makes Mr. Taub so suitable and excellent a performer of it is that his virtuosity is delivered as much from the mind as from the hands, and that there's no sensible difference between the two. His fingers think. The movement, the search, and the feel of thought are present at the keys, and if he plays fast—as he often does in allegros—that's because he thinks fast.

His thought on this occasion began with the programming. First came late Brahms, the Op. 116 Fantasias, and then early Berg, in a group of three short pieces selected from among recently published juvenilia. Such resurrections of early efforts—which the composer never published or put out for performance, and may well have forgotten or kept only as mementos—have their aesthetic and moral problems: only the night before, in Carnegie Hall, the Philadelphia Orchestra under David Zinman had played the symphonic poem "Im Sommerwind," by Berg's colleague Webern, a work that begins as a lush late-Romantic idyll (with sensuous opportunities for the Philadelphia strings) but soon goes careering off in harebrained fashion, hijacked by one bizarre little ensemble after another. Only in the light of later Webern does this student piece, completed when he was twenty, come to any sense, and if the Philadelphia had played it alongside, say, the Op. 30 Variations, then some interesting musical points might have been made. That was how Mr. Taub proceeded. The young Berg's studies provided a line of development carrying through from the Brahms to his own Sonata, and so the juvenile excursion was thoroughly justified by the context. As for the pieces themselves, they rather supported Schoenberg's not impartial judgment on Berg's even earlier music: "When he came to me . . . his imagination apparently could not work on anything but lieder. . . . He was absolutely incapable of writing an instrumental movement or inventing an instrumental theme." The pieces Mr. Taub played are, indeed, songs without words, but then an overriding vocality of expression remained typical of Berg: it's there in the Sonata.

The Sonata was Berg's Op. 1, and it was followed in Mr. Taub's program, surprisingly aptly, by Babbitt's first major publication, the set of Three Compositions he wrote in 1947-48. The intermission then collapsed the gap of more than four decades to the new Babbitt piece, and the recital ended with Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata, which made everything before it—even the music composed nearly two hundred years after it—sound like preparation. The program thus had a flow—an urge—from beginning to end, but it also abounded in cross-references. Berg and Babbitt were both discovered in the exhilaration of finding a language. Babbitt's zest for repeated notes ran straight through into the opening of the "Waldstein." Beethoven brought some kind of adequate counterpoise and resolve to the Brahms, at the start of the evening, while also mirroring the quasi-sonata of Babbitt's Three Compositions, at the end of the first half. The end-directedness of the program, and of the Beethoven at the end, was a feature, too, of the Babbitt "Preludes, Interludes, and Postlude": the work opens out in register toward its conclusion, becoming ever more alarming in its technical demands.

The qualities in Mr. Taub that make him such an estimable Babbitt performer would have to include this ability to create cogently related activities within a stretch of time. His sensitivity to context helped make the seven Brahms Fantasias into a connected group—a lumbering suite, if not quite a sonata—and it's entirely possible that, out of the same sensitivity, he might have played some pieces differently if they'd had different neighbors in his running order. The authority of his playing comes partly from his feeling for the program as a long-range unit, from his knowing why he's placed this particular piece to be played just here. In this musical knowledge, perhaps, lies most deeply his kinship with Babbitt.

Knowledge makes possible his combination of bright ease, of perfect familiarity at the keyboard, with a distrust of all the obvious solutions that such familiarity might seem to imply. Nothing is taken for granted. Tempting invitations—like the invitation to Romantic amplitude and nostalgic lingering at the start of the Berg Sonata—are refused, in the interests of a strenuous exploring of the music, almost note by note, so that even after the notes have been drawn into phrases, which sway or hang or leap, and do so with the physical presence and grip I've already intimated, there's still in the sound a hint of the detachment through which it had to pass. The seemingly spontaneous—that great sailing melody from the finale of the "Waldstein"—is not the starting point but, rather, the product of a process of trial and discipline, the same kind of process by which Beethoven himself arrived at his themes, whether through a musical development, as in this sonata, or through the real-time travails of his composing life. However genial a figure Mr. Taub is on the platform, there's a touch of mercilessness in his musicianship.

So there is, too, in Babbitt's, arising from this same need to make everything the result of conscious reflection, and from this same virtuosity of rapidity. Part of the wonder of the centerpiece from his early set of Compositions comes out of its rarity as a piece in which he stops to stare, and ponder, and move gently. Much more frequent is the dazzle of the presto. Virtuosity becomes substance. The meaning of the outer Compositions—certainly as Mr. Taub plays them—is bound up with the astonishment of notes, of fingers, spilling with a liquid mobility. One's made to marvel, and yet within the marvelling it's possible to respond to wit (in the first Composition, with its cartoon effects of sudden about-turn or pause) and to high spirits (in the third).

In the case of this Babbitt work, one can hear something of how speed has become, with growing knowledge, musically functional in Mr. Taub's hands, because he's made two recordings of it. The first was in 1981, for his début release on CRI, where the vigor of his fast playing has its attractions but sounds a bit lumpy and uncoördinated. By 1985, when he made a recording of all Babbitt's important solo piano works, for Harmonia Mundi, the essentials of his performance were in place: the quick pieces have a commanding fluency, and there's no longer any doubt about why they have to be quick, no longer any distance between the vision on the page and its achievement at the keyboard. The playing is even faster than four years before, but it sounds much more comfortable. The marvellous has been caught, as it was again, still more commandingly, at Merkin Hall.

There might now be enough reason for Mr. Taub to record another complete Babbitt—particularly since "Preludes, Interludes, and Postlude," completed in the summer of 1991, adds to the repertory another big single movement on the scale of "Canonical Form" (1983), which was the occasion of the first Babbitt-Taub collaboration. Like that predeces-

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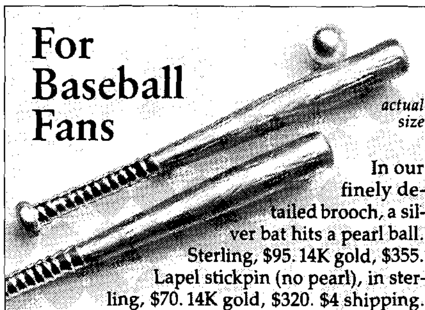

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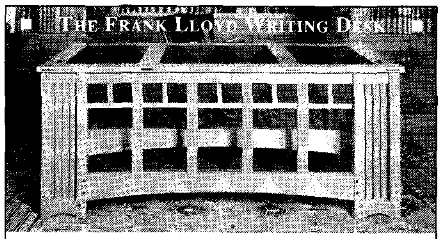

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sor, the new piece is a sequence of episodes, but the boundaries are less distinct, and it's not unambiguously clear which are the preludes, which are the interludes separating them, or just where the postlude begins. There are seven sections—these, I gather, are the preludes—of roughly the same length and in roughly the same allegretto tempo, all of them similar, too, in proceeding by means of clear two-part counterpoint in which each hand is locked into a small part of the keyboard. The first prelude, for instance, keeps inside the space of two octaves: piano music for mezzo-sopranos. The third prelude is all high; the fourth dramatically opposes the far extremes. In between come stretches in which the control of register is looser and the counterpoint more ruffled, all these being in discreetly slower tempos. Then, for the final third of the piece, the alternation breaks down, and through a four-phased acceleration the music revisits every possibility of registral placing.

Though trickier in structure than "Canonical Form," the new piece is more even in tone. Possibly, Babbitt has arrived at a moment of alpine serenity; some support for that conclusion comes from the only other recent piece of his I've heard, the luminous "Consortini," for flute, cello, piano, and percussion, recorded by the Griffin Music Ensemble of Boston. In "Preludes, Interludes, and Postlude," the most conspicuous events are the movements from one area of the keyboard to another; the changes of tempo are less pronounced, and the general moderate-quick pace suggests a smiling self-possession. What the music also proves, though it may be discourteous to mention the fact, is that Babbitt at seventy-six is as lucid, alert, and limber an imaginer as ever he was.

Indeed, the calm of "Preludes" may be not a new calm at all but a particular expression of Babbitt's characteristic distrust of the isolated gesture. The most frequent gestures in the piece, and throughout Babbitt's music, are the wobble and the jitter—things that hardly disturb the continuity. His greatest gift to music—at once a gift and a challenge to his listeners—is this calmness of surface, this quiet insistence that momentary happenings are not to be overregarded, that what constitutes the piece is the piece as a whole. The customary disposition of a piece into sections is merely a necessary aid to feeble human memory. If we try to follow some process within a section, we'll be frustrated by myriad possibilities: the distinction lies not in the process but in the full object.

In this new approach to musical time is one of the traits that make Babbitt a close cousin to Cage. Among other similarities, both men adopted arcane and laborious techniques—twelve-tone combinatoriality, chance operations—that may in a vague way define where the music operates but say very little about what it is and why it is so. Both, in their public statements, chose to emphasize the method rather than the product, and, if only by example, influenced their followers to do the same. Both narrowed their historical sights on a very particular tiny area: Satie for Cage, the later Schoenberg and the last Stravinsky for Babbitt. Both created personas—the technician, the coin-tosser—at a far remove from common notions of the artist. And we may find that such a work as "Preludes," for all its surface activity, glides through time, and exerts itself in the memory as a single object, much as a Cage piece does.

Against that, this new work is littered with teases to draw one away from the whole precisely into the detail. They include the repeated notes, which have always been a feature of Babbitt's music, and which, in their elastic bounce, echo his fondness for jazz. Here they're especially abundant, and Mr. Taub, coming to chains of as many as eight attacks on the same note or duplet, would sound like someone arrived at a point of intersection, and standing still to look in several directions before moving on. The other small moments that bulge into prominence are those in which some tonal understanding of the music becomes unavoidable. To take the most notable example, there's a point about halfway through the piece (in the seventh, last, low-lying prelude) where the unsupervised bass suddenly comes up with a motion of fully Romantic harmony: a cadence in E-flat followed by a slide up to E major. I know it's against the rules to hear Babbitt's music in that way, just as it's against the rules in Cage to hear two sounds as linked by any intentional endeavor. But the possibility of the ear's error is part of what makes the idealism of these two composers so admirable and so bracing. ♦

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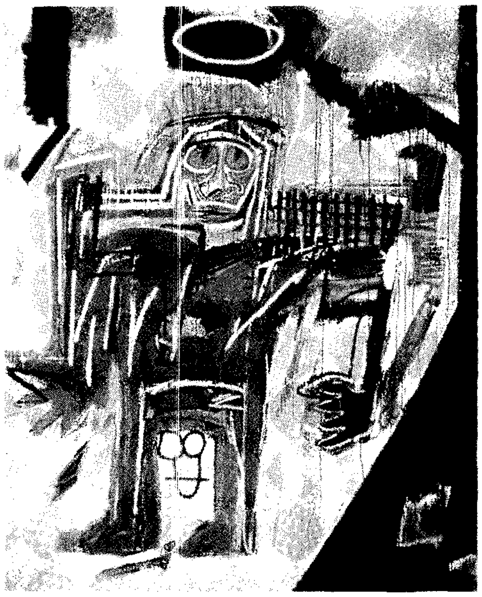
THE ART WORLD

MADISON AVENUE PRIMITIVE

by Adam Gopnik

When the Whitney Museum announced early this year that it would put on a full-dress retrospective of the paintings and drawings of Jean-Michel Basquiat, public opinion in New York immediately divided into two camps—well, three camps, actually, into the largest and drowsiest of which I was naturally, if unprofessionally, inclined to fall. Basquiat, and the big Basquiat question—"Is it art or vandalism?"—was one of the hot controversies of 1984; to be compelled to run through it again seemed about as appetizing as being compelled to once again examine Geraldine Ferraro's tax returns.



Jean-Michel Basquiat's "Pater" (1982)

© ESTATE OF JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT

But, apparently, certain eighties debates are doomed to be refought forever. Now that the Basquiat show has actually opened, up on the Whitney's fourth floor, the two camps, pro- and anti-Basquiat, are right back in place. On one side are the Basquiat bashers, led by the redoubtable Robert Hughes; they maintain that Basquiat was a barely sentient graffiti marker who was picked up by the downtown art world, which, with its special mixture of condescension and solemn cultishness, gave him paints and brushes, fed him cocaine, and told him he was an artist—with the farcical results of this transaction now being institutionalized by the Whitney (some of whose patrons, it's said, have a lot of Basquiats in their collections). The boosters—led, bizarrely, by that constant friend to hip-hop culture the *Times* (that alone should tell you something about the underlying unreality of the whole battle)—take the position that Basquiat was a natural genius who summoned into his paintings the previously taboo energy and vitality of the streets and got martyred for his troubles—an artist "whose works poetically evoke the vicious greed, racism, and inhumanity of the society he was struggling to learn to live within," as David Ross, the director of the Whitney, puts it in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue. Even by art-world standards, it is a bad-tempered dispute, with each side accusing the other of at least latent racism. The bashers say that Basquiat was taken up by the art world because he conformed to an inherently stereotyped notion of the black artist as an instinctual, rhythmic innocent; the boosters insist that the bashers cannot bear any young black man's entrance into the pantheon, and that the constant Basquiat criticism (and the attempt to promote in his place "safer" black artists, such as Martin Puryear) is ultimately the expression of an "intractable white supremacism."

There are some good a-priori reasons to make even people who don't much like Basquiat's pictures a little reluctant to quickly take sides with the bashers. They are in the morally dubious position of kicking a man—and a black man at that—when he is not just down but already in his grave: Basquiat died in 1988, at twenty-seven, of a drug overdose. Besides, some of the Basquiat criticism is a little shaky. The often repeated idea that his problem was that he lacked any formal training in academic draftsmanship is silly; an artist needs only as much conventional "technique" as his form of expression demands. (As a

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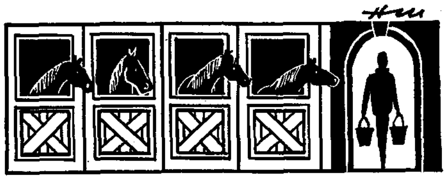
draftsman, Basquiat was no worse, if no better, than Barnett Newman or Frank Stella.) And the hints of a dark, money-grubbing conspiracy on the part of the Whitney patrons are pure tabloid melodrama. Basquiat, as the catalogue reminds us, has no shortage of disinterested supporters; he deserves his day in court. A pendant notion—that this exhibition marks some fatal decline in the Whitney's commitment to "serious" painting—is equally overwrought. Scarcely hours after the opening of the Basquiat show, the museum will put on a retrospective of the art of Agnes Martin, the grande dame of minimalism, whose work represents, in its refinement, fastidiousness, and detached aestheticism, all the virtues that the Basquiat exhibition is supposed to deny. Parnassus has many mansions, and a museum has many rooms. Any museum that shies away from a Basquiat show because it is sure to be disliked by some people is a museum that has doomed itself to a lifetime of Fairfield Porter retrospectives.

Part of one's heart may even lie with the boosters: given the energy, complexity, and originality of spray-can graffiti in New York, nothing would have been more stirring than for an authentic, singular voice to rise from the subways, rather in the way that, say, Louis Armstrong rose from the Mississippi riverboat bands. Yet if one's head sides with the bashers and one's heart with the boosters, one's eyes are likely to side with neither. Both sides take it for granted that, for better or worse, this is a story of the museum's confronting the "other." In fact, it's a story of the museum's once again confronting itself, and liking what it sees.

Far from being even marginally in touch with the spray-can gleam and manic vitality of real New York subway art, the Basquiat pictures on the walls of the Whitney are weirdly anachronistic—dutiful schoolboy inventories of every received idea of "raw" or "primitive" utterance that had been circulating in modern art since before the First World War. Basquiat did indeed "powerfully evoke the life of the New York streets"—Seventy-fifth Street, Fifty-third Street, and Eighty-ninth Street. The discerning viewer will spot large stretches of Madison Avenue, and even certain choice blocks in SoHo. It is pure academic painting—rhetoric robbed of any connection to idiosyncratic experience—made painful because its maker had none of the intellectual assurance or self-irony that keeps academic painters comfy within their clichés. The "African" masks, the coarse, zappy line, the scarifications, the scribbling intensity: these are not just the primitive clichés of 1984. They are the primitive clichés of 1948—or, for that matter, of 1918. Right now, downstairs at the Whitney, in a rather good eccentric show of American figurative art, there are two 1918 drawings of a Hopi snake dance by the forgotten American artist Jan Matulka, and nearly every one of the "raw" stylizations that Basquiat employed is part of the language of primitive expression in the Matulka drawings: the zigzag rhythms, the jagged line, the "masklike" eyes, the geometric reductions of eyes and noses to lozenges and rectangles, the ominous grins—they're all there. It was corny in 1918, and it was still corny in 1988.

But nobody is putting on a Matulka retrospective. What keeps Basquiat's reputation afloat, despite the obviously derivative nature of his art, is a series of biographical myths. First among them is that Basquiat rose from the ranks of the graffiti writers. In fact, Basquiat, the child of an upper-middle-class Haitian and Hispanic family, was never more than a street scribbler, putting up "tags," or personal signatures, on walls, rather than painting "burners" on trains. (The tag that Basquiat used in the early eighties was SAMO—short for "same old shit.") The real graffiti writers had, like all "outsider" artists, an extraordinarily high craft standard, which Basquiat did not even aspire to; they regarded him as hardly more than a "toy"—a kid. The tragedy of Basquiat's ascent is that his ersatz primitivism crowded out any cultural space that might have been filled by the genuinely original "wildstyle" that the subway writers invented in the early eighties. Theirs was one of the few genuinely original and inspired decorative looks to have appeared in the past twenty years: the gaudy, maniacally congested gleaming letters overlapping and intertwined in patterns as hypnotically dazzling as any Hibernian illumination—part Gaudi and part Walt Disney. It was an authentic vernacular expression, and, not surprisingly, it had a profound effect on visual consciousness, influencing everything from Frank Stella's painted reliefs to a porcelain coffee set sponsored by Villeroy & Boch.



Wildstyle, though, never found a real home in the art world proper. The good stuff was too big, and too ephemeral: once the style was reduced to conventional canvas size, it looked thin. Basquiat had the shrewdness, or instinct, to see that what the collectors really wanted was exactly the same old shit—an art that might have some of the "heat" of graffiti but could be quickly assimilated into the international "neo-expressionist" styles that in the early eighties were already an all-purpose dealers' broadloom, bought and sold by the yard. In place of the real illuminated tangle of spray-can art, Basquiat offered the art world a more immediately recognizable inventory of instant "primitive" clichés that he had picked up by looking at art books. There was the Dubuffet stick figure, the Cy Twombly scrawl, a few paint strokes borrowed from de Kooning, and a bit of grotesquerie taken from Picasso.

At some level, even Basquiat's admirers recognize the eclectic, rule-bound nature of his art, and the recognition gives their "appreciation" of it a weird undercurrent of contempt. There is throughout the new show—in its hanging, in the organization of its catalogue—a deep, probably unconscious hostility toward the artist it claims to enshrine. The pictures are crowded tightly together, three or four to a wall, and no sense of development, change, or variation is allowed to intrude on the show's attempt to force on them an air of "savage" vitality; the pictures' particular demands for scale or presence are simply ignored. The catalogue is so sloppily done as to make a Basquiat detractor want to write a spirited defense of the artist, just so that there could be something serious to argue with. Like unskilled poker players, Basquiat's admirers have the exasperating habit of wildly upping the stakes, only to immediately reveal everything in their hands. Richard Marshall, the show's curator, attempts to demonstrate Basquiat's impeccable high-art connections by reproducing in his essay several pages of museum art (Dubuffet, Twombly, Picasso) that looks, not surprisingly, like Basquiat's pictures, and then he treats this resemblance as though it were essentially an amazing, uncanny "convergence"—putting one in mind of the kind of moment on "Star Trek" when Dr. McCoy, having discovered that the inhabitants of a new planet looked and talked exactly like all the other actors on the show, used to turn to the captain and, awestruck, announce, "Jim, my instruments show that these life-forms are . . . *indistinguishable from humans!*"

No harm, perhaps, is done by this, or by the endless comparisons in the catalogue of Basquiat to Goya, Picasso, and other big names. What *is* unforgivable is the endless comparisons in the catalogue essays of Basquiat to the masters of American jazz. Basquiat, who for a time played in a "noise band"—a simulacrum of a hard-bop band—had a regard for the great jazz instrumentalists. He once made a picture in memory of Charlie Parker: against a brown and black background he scribbled the letters "CPRKR" and "Stanhope Hotel April Second Nineteen Fifty-Five." (That was the place of Parker's death and date of his Carnegie Hall memorial; Basquiat had originally written "Fifty-Three," and then crossed it out.) In its cultural piety, it is sort of touching (in 1982, how many twenty-two-year-olds even knew who Charlie Parker was?) until one discovers that this work is being put forward as an example of Parker's stylistic influence on Basquiat. Klaus Kertess, a Whitney curator who is one of the catalogue contributors, explains, diplomatically, that Basquiat "made sounds on a clarinet," and that this gave him an understanding of "the heterogeneous open-endedness, often furious tempo and edgy urban cadences" of Parker's music, which are evoked by the "frantic crudeness" of this Basquiat painting. Well, far from embracing a "heterogeneous open-endedness," Parker—like Miles Davis and Lester Young, both also invoked in the catalogue—was a master of concise dramatic form and of lucid classical emotion. If there was one thing that made them all despair more than any other, it was the condescension of those who found in their infinitely subtle, lyrical art merely a "frantic crudeness"—a characterization that recalls the worst days of Carl Van Vechten in Harlem.

Given the academic eclecticism of Basquiat's art, the only interesting question left is why so many people feel a passionate personal investment in it. The first reason, I suspect, is that Basquiat was one of the most vivid figures to be found in the East Village bohemia of the early eighties. The people hanging around East Sixth Street then were no dumber or more corrupt than the people who were hanging around the Bateau-Lavoir in 1910; they were just less talented. To deny Basquiat is for a lot of people to deny the legitimacy of this bohemia—and, in a culture that still turns on the myth of endless successive bohemias, that is an enraging thing to do. Second, there is what Greg Tate, in a revealing paragraph in his catalogue essay, calls the "cargo cult" aspect of painting. For a lot of professional art-world people, painting can survive now only as a ritual invoking of cultural pieties, in which the simple enumeration of a "concern" or the dropping of a name (à la Charlie Parker) is supposed to magically summon up the spirit of a fully realized art.

The one musical figure whom Basquiat does resemble, though at a much lower level of accomplishment, is that other eighties meteor Michael Jackson. In both, a surface of borrowed expressive effects—crotch grabbings and ritualized writhings—simulate the look of uninhibited self-disclosure without covering up an opacity at the center of the artist's personality. Artists express themselves not only to let us know them but also to help them know themselves. When your art is made up of "impressions" of other people's expressive gestures, self-discovery becomes nearly impossible. "He was too externalized; he didn't have a strong enough internal life," Mary Boone said once shrewdly about Basquiat. *Pace* his bashers, Basquiat wasn't unacquainted with the great traditions of modernist invention; in fact, he knew them by heart. His tragedy was that with him they *were* externalized, and crowded out any chance he might have had to find a personal language of his own. Basquiat was no "fraud," any more than Michael Jackson is a fraud; he was simply someone imprisoned by the success of his own apprentice work. (He bears the same relationship to Twombly and Dubuffet that Michael Jackson does to James Brown and Sam & Dave.) All he had at hand (or was encouraged to use) was the rote forms of French painting, half a century old. When the art world responded to his mimicry as though it were authentic, it left whatever might have become authentic in his art permanently unexpressed. ♦

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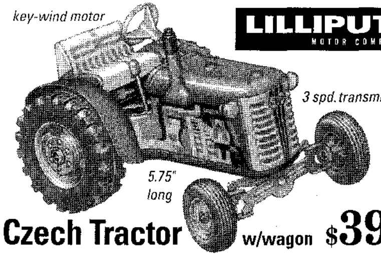

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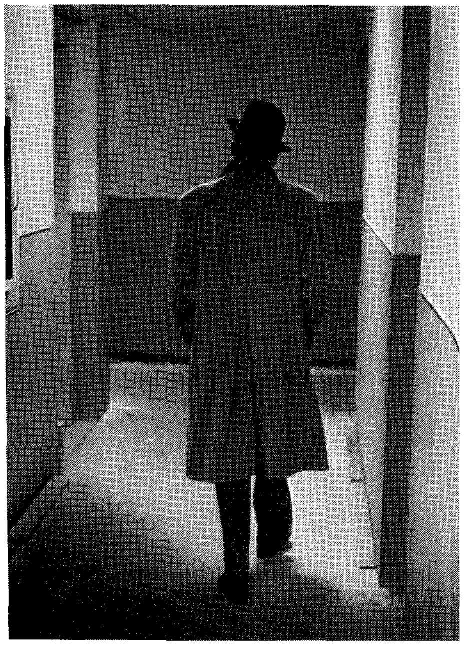
ON TELEVISION

THE LAST SWINGER

by James Wolcott

NO American singer plays solitaire better than Frank Sinatra. What he brought to the mike stand was a confessional mode couched in a new nervous system. As the jazz critic Gene Lees has observed, he was to American song "what Montgomery Clift was to American acting"—he embodied the same lean cut of stricken awareness. If you were casting the story of the young Sinatra, you'd want an actor with Clift's naked wiring—no easy find. Philip Casnoff, in the title role of the five-hour mini-series "Sinatra" (November 8th and 10th, CBS), is handsome and courtly, carrying himself with a hey-babe shrug. Even when fear makes his voice flutter, he stays inside his candy wrapper. But although the executive producer of "Sinatra" is Sinatra's youngest daughter, Tina, the docudrama itself can't be accused of being overprotective. It's a valentine box spiked with a few poison flavors.



Directed by James Sadwith, "Sinatra" begins as a standard sepia-tint immigrant saga. Hoboken, New Jersey, 1925: The picturesque streets teem with pushcarts, urchins, stickball players, and antique cars, all trying not to run over each other. Still in knickers, Sinatra is set upon as a sissy boy for carrying sheet music in his Buster Brown outfit. He arrives home ragged. "Just what the world needs, another punch-drunk palooka," says his mother, Dolly, played, by Olympia Dukakis, as if she'd just been chipped off a mountainside. A vital cog in Hoboken's political machine, Dolly Sinatra delivers votes and extracts paybacks, shoehorning her husband, Marty (Joe Santos, who has to yell just to b heard), into the Fire Department. Imagine her fried clams when her own flesh and blood at first refuses to attend a rally for the mayor, declaring, "I ain't carryin' no sign for nobody." In bold type, William Mastrosimone's Bowery Boys dialogue telegraphs that even as a snot-nosed nobody Frank Sinatra didn't follow anyone's lead. When he tries to strike out on his own, his father calls him a quitter. It only makes him bite his lip even harder.

As a slide show of Sinatra's early and middle years and career, "Sinatra" doesn't skip many frames. His marriage to the former Nancy Barbato (Gina Gershon), and the birth of their children; his harmonizing with the Hoboken Four, and his tours with the bandleaders Harry James and Tommy Dorsey (from the latter, he learned the breath control that enabled him to link enjambments in the lyrics); his famous shows at the Paramount, where bobby-soxers swooned, squealed, and swooped like Furies on a heckler who hurled an egg; his fall fro grace as he saw singers like Eddie Fisher become the hottest thing in hair tonic; his comeback, in "From Here to Eternity," where he worked with Montgomery Clift, and may have picked up some sensitivity pointers—each highlight is dropped into its carrousel slot. Absent is Sinatra's assiduous mastering of the vocal craft, the phrases that curl like smoke; with so much road to retrace, there's no time to marvel over his mid-

© PHIL STERN PHOTO

night-hour monk-bent-over-a-scroll musicianship. The pure run of Sinatra's Capitol recordings is conveyed by a corny montage of album covers, but at least it's Sinatra's voice on the soundtrack, not some substitute's. Whenever the images lag, the music supplies carbonation. With a CD tie-in, "Sinatra" is a greatest-hits medley masked as a replay of celebrity gossip.

Famous faces from the Hollywood wax museum are wheeled out to pay homage, but not all the faces fit their former owners. The poor actor who plays Humphrey Bogart, for example, looks, with his baked-apple head, like a member of the Politburo. As the slow torture of Sinatra's life, Marcia Gay Harden's Ava Gardner stops time as she *slowly* lets slide her wrap in a night club and stunned extras form a group silhouette. On sheets as white as sails, she and Frank have their own montage of amour. How they laugh! How they loll! Sinatra chases this pitcher of cream all the way to Spain, and sneers "Hit the bricks, Zorro" at the matador he suspects of making smooching sounds at Ava. Watching these scenes, you're aware of how awkward a climb up the stepladder it is when mere mortals essay legends. Barbra Streisand as Fanny Brice in "Funny Girl," Diana Ross as Billie Holiday in "Lady Sings the Blues" had a charisma quotient equal to or larger than that of the stars they depicted. Their performances were chemical mixtures, not historical reënactments. But when Casnoff's Frank and Harden's Ava bicker on the set of "Mogambo" they're just two actors trying hard in a tent. There's nothing numinous about them. Likewise, Nina Siemaszko, who, as Mia Farrow, presents Sinatra with a flower, lacks Farrow's shorn-angel soft focus. The one actor who resonates is Rod Steiger, as the Chicago gang boss Sam Giancana. He plays the part as if he had a pork chop hanging around his neck. If only Casnoff's Sinatra developed some of Steiger's crust. Instead, he remains self-conscious, removed, tender to the touch, like the miniseries itself.

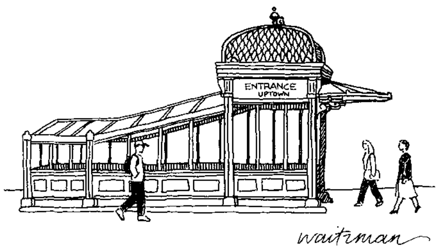
SWAGGER is central to the Sinatra mystique. The Frank Sinatra that Gay Talese monitored in his famous 1966 *Esquire* article "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" possessed a force field that few could match. In recent years, Sinatra has become a Zeus figure to the younger set, not as a singer but as a former swinger—as the ringleader of the Rat Pack, a posse that included Dean Martin, Joey Bishop, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Peter Lawford. They were a law unto themselves—Sinatra especially. Pesty paparazzi found themselves flying backward. Whenever the Sinatra entourage caught Don Rickles' standup act, Rickles would say, by way of greeting, "Hey, Frank, make yourself at home—*hit* somebody." The Sands Hotel in Las Vegas was the Rat Pack's palatial pad. When they played the Sands' Copa Room, the high rollers were in hooker heaven. It would take a combination of Suetonius and Terry Southern to do justice to the pagan schlock of this *Playboy* "Satyricon." (The SCTV troupe satirized the bongo rhythms of the Rat Pack's buddy routine in a takeoff of "Ocean's Eleven.")

What escalates this epic seltzer battle above vulgar spectacle is its political fallout. After Sammy Davis, Jr., played by David Raynr, loses an eye in an auto accident, Sinatra escorts him into a steam bath—where everyone is wearing an eye patch in Sammy's honor. There's someone new to the crew. "Around here, we call him Chicky-Baby," Sinatra says as he introduces Sammy to the distinguished junior senator from Massachusetts, Jack Kennedy (James F. Kelly). At a Copa performance that Kennedy attends, Dino (Danny Gans) lifts Sammy in his arms and says, "I'd like to thank the N.A.A.C.P. for this award." Too tricky or sticky for "Sinatra" to note is that on that same night Sinatra introduced Kennedy to a squeeze of his named Judith Campbell, who also later became Giancana's mistress. With Giancana's support, in the form of union votes and mob money, Sinatra greases the Presidential campaign. After the inauguration, he saunters into the Oval Office and says (the jauntiest line in the miniseries), "I can't call you Chicky-Baby anymore." "Sure, you can," says J.F.K., in the lamest J.F.K. accent ever recorded.

Chicky-Baby or no Chicky-Baby, Sinatra soon finds himself barred from Camelot. Attorney General Bobby Kennedy (Todd Waring) digs his spurs into Sam Giancana's backside. Giancana complains to Sinatra, but Sinatra has lost his leverage with the Kennedy clan. The ultimate snub comes when Bobby, in a desire to distance his brother from the Giancana connection, has Peter Lawford (Joris Stuyck) inform Sinatra that the President will be staying in Palm Springs not with him but, rather, at Bing Crosby's house. Crosby, who's not even a Democrat! Sinatra freaks out. Blaming Lawford for siding with the Kennedys, he hurls a telephone at him and blackballs him from the Rat Pack. Take your golf clubs and get out of town, turncoat! Lawford leaves, a broken lackey.

It's also a cold slap for Sinatra. A liberal Democrat, he drifts to the Republican right, serenading the Reagans in his old age. It's this Sinatra that Joe Piscopo and Phil Hartman parody—the Geritol Godfather in a snowcap toupee, who swivels his torso like a turret, stares death in the headlights, and punches out the lyrics to "That's Life" like some master of fat-cat kung fu.

Comic exaggeration gets at Sinatra's gutsy mystique better than careful set dressing. And comedy doesn't interfere with our feeling for the music. It doesn't make a religion out of it. About three-quarters of the way through "Sinatra," when our guy in a fedora is married to Mia Farrow, he steams into the room to hear the Yardbirds' "I'm a Man" cranking from the radio. "It's not music, it's crap," Sinatra says, in a sulk. But the very cruddiness of the Yardbirds tune (the lead singer sounds as if he had yellow teeth) has a churning force. Great as Frank Sinatra is, by the end of "Sinatra" you're a little tired of his pearly tones. You're ready for some barbarian thrash and distortion. Even a beautiful mood can become monotonous. ♦



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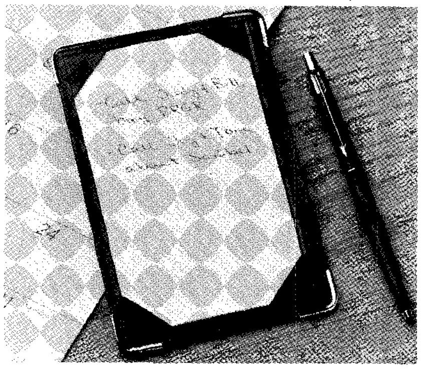

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THE THEATRE

ONE-MAN UNIVERSE

by John Lahr

FASTER than you can say "huevos rancheros," John Leguizamo bolts onto the Westside Theatre's stage and takes command of the paying customers in "Spic-O-Rama," his fierce and funny one-man meditation on Latino life in the Big City. As the manic nine-year-old motor-mouth and self-professed "genius" Miguelito (Miggy) Gigante, Leguizamo, in the first of six well-written and shrewdly mounted monologues, dashes around the set introducing us to the Gigante family and to the totems of dispossessed Latino life among the gringos—the chain-link fence, the pay phone, the motorless jalopy on blocks, the laundromat. As he bounces around in orange track pants, purple knit hat, and thick glasses, with a mouthful of protruding teeth, the only thing gigantic about Miggy's prospects is his overbite.

Miggy is giving a slide show about the Gigante family for his science-fair project, and we have the good fortune to be in class for his version of show-and-tell. To the class, Miggy and his project are as welcome as a returning kamikaze pilot. "I can, too, do it on my family," Miggy protests, breaking off in mid-flow to challenge a critic. "It's better than pigeon as a new food source." Miggy's hip-hop swagger can't keep bleakness from breaking through his bravado. "Your father is in jail," he sings. "Your brother's out on bail." Miggy is a vulgar comic whirlwind who with each jab throws off some wonderful surprise. "Did you ever kiss a rabbit between the ears?" he says to a bumptious classmate, pulling his pants pockets inside out and thrusting his pelvis toward him. "Kiss it." Violence and barbarity are the facts of daily life and the vigorish of every story.

The defining solitude of the Latin temperament—reinforced by these soliloquies—is made into myth by Miggy, who perceives even his own family as aliens. "At exactly five o'clock, carloads of the most nasty freakazoids are gonna come to my house for my brother's wedding," he says. "And so I'm a runaway, and the next time you see me I'll be on the back of a carton of chocolate milk." The men in Miggy's family are no mambo kings; the women are no Chita Riveras. They are snapshots of the invisible Latinos who make up twenty-five per cent of New York City and eight per cent of the nation, and who service gringo culture, but whose own culture plays no significant role in mainstream American life. Miggy aptly titles his presentation "Monsters, Freaks, and Weirdos," and adds, "I wish they were regular mutants." All of Leguizamo's characters are comic grotesques, exaggerations intended to make the unseen visible. "To the hard of hearing you shout," Flannery O'Connor said about the use of the grotesque. "And for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures." "Spic-O-Rama" does just that: it transforms a world of waste into sharply intelligent and unforgettable pictures.

No full-face of Leguizamo adorns the program, only his forehead and eyes. And no clear image of him emerges until Leguizamo's actual face is fleetingly glimpsed at the curtain call. He is always hidden, guarded, taking potshots at society from one disguise after another. "I think comedy's resourceful," says Leguizamo, who is twenty-eight, and who, before he knew how to knock 'em dead with laughter, grew up in Queens wanting to be a gangster. "My life was like the play—very dark and very sinister. Humor saved me. I used to make everybody laugh in our violent family. In school, too. That's what I used to do to keep from being hurt. I had to have something. They were really *way* hard, man."

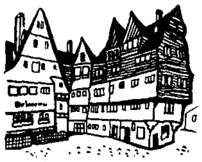
As the title of his show indicates, Leguizamo is taking special aim at racism; but he knows, as Nietzsche did, that "one does not kill by anger but by laughter," and, to be lethal, laughter sometimes has to be politically incorrect. Miggy doesn't fight against racist attacks; instead, he goes with the thrust of the stereotype, carrying its irrationality to ludicrous conclusions. "Yes, I am a spic," Miggy says to a racist taunt. "I'm Spic-tacular! I'm Spic-torious!" The culprit is thrown by Miggy's laughter, which empowers him, as it does Leguizamo. "Comedy changes things," Leguizamo says of Miggy's playful imagination. "Takes the ugly, makes it wonderful. Takes the bad and makes it good. That's how people will finally understand Latin things."

Onstage and off, Leguizamo dramatizes life as combat. "It's hard out there, man," he says. "You try to scramble, to claw with your fingernails, to feel that you can contribute and that you will be appreciated. As a Latino, I say to myself I have to be twice as resilient as a white person and twice as resourceful if I'm going to survive." Part of the joke of Leguizamo's characters is that they talk combat but live defeat. "Don't roll your eyes at me," the hilarious Gigante mother, Gladys, says to one of her numerous children. "If she takes your bicycle, just push her off." And in lovelorn frenzy Miggy's brother Krazy Willie flourishes a gun as cavalierly as if it were a pack of cigarettes, threatening, variously, to blow away his fiancée, his brains, and—the ultimate loss—his penis. He shoves the gun in his crotch, only to retrieve it quickly. "Damn, that shit's hot," he says. The macho mannerisms, the fatalism (the first half of life is destroyed by your parents, says Miggy's father, sardonically named Felix, "and the second half ruined by your kids"), the isolated distrust of the world are all aspects of the landscape of loss for which the chain-link fence in Loy Arcenas's fine set is a metaphor.

Leguizamo came to the United States, at the age of four, from Colombia. "I'm kind of second-generation," he says. His characters are definitely second-generation American Latinos, neither quite Latin nor quite American. They straddle two worlds, successful in neither—trapped both by their skin and by their alienation. "I don't know why people insist on knowing themselves. It's hard enough to know what to wear," says the camp blond Rafael Gigante, who sees himself as "urine-colored," and who, with the help of British Received Pronunciation and Clorox, tries to pass in the white world as "the love child of Sir Laurence Olivier." His macho brother Willie, strutting in his Desert Storm fatigue pants and sucking on a beer, has low expectations and, unfortunately, doesn't live up to them. In Leguizamo's impersonation, every assertion of prowess betrays Willie's life of impotence. Willie can't get money. He can't get girls. He can't get glory—not even for Desert Storm. "I risked my life, shot people who look like us but with towels on their heads, to protect our American way of life," he says. "Where's my respect?"

Leguizamo's characters live off what one of them calls "discount dreams." They are all driven crazy by America's climate of expectation, which never quite delivers for them. "I always wanted to have a life, one that I could talk about," says Gladys, whose career turned out to be kids and running a laundry. "I had the brains but not the clothes. That's why I dropped out of high school." Her son Willie has dropped out of reality altogether in his dreams of *yanqui* glory; and her husband drunkenly still claims that Carlos Santana, Mr. Oye Como Va himself, once told him he was the best maracas player Santana had ever heard. "I could of played with one of the great Latin rock and rollers," he says. "Grabbed God by the ears and kissed him smack on the lips."

These dreams are not so much deferred as demented. They feed the climate of living death, which in Latin festivals takes the form of skull masks, skeletons, and skull candies, and which is also a crucial part of Leguizamo's stage-managed fiesta. Leguizamo caresses horror, celebrates it, makes it sensational, and even produces his version of a skeleton at the feast, the paraplegic Javier Gigante. In a wheelchair, contorted both in posture and in speech, Javier haunts the occasion with his bright disgust at the family, especially his womanizing father. "It's so easy for you. No thinking, no caring, no feeling—you just do it," says Javier, who can't ever have an erection. "Short, fat, ugly, if you've never succeeded in anything in life, you're still doing what *every man has done since the beginning of time*. You're a mambo king, an Aztec lord, an Inca prince . . . every Hernandez and Fernandez." With typical daring, Leguizamo introduces this character three-quarters of the way through his high-spirited evening. It's hard to watch him. By suddenly submerging the audience in Javier's gruesome presence and his acid thoughts, Leguizamo risks losing the spectators and the show's momentum. It's a dangerous game, which Leguizamo wins by virtue of his fearlessness.



So vivid are the stories Leguizamo spins and so fluid is his use of the stage that we imagine a whole universe at play in his one-man show. His characters act out the trauma of changing cultures which has left them fragmented and fractious, unable in the puritan North American culture to sustain its idea of progress or their idea of communion, either. Having abandoned their past, they feel, like Miggy in the show's epilogue, abandoned by their God. As Miggy hangs from a trapeze in his bedroom, dreaming of being a basketball player, he prays, "God, please don't make me a jockey." And later, when he can't drown out the noise of his quarrelling parents, he again beseeches God, who seems as far away as the dusty figurines of the Virgin Mary that decorate the top of the set. "God," he says, stretching himself on the trapeze, "if you stop them, I'll be the best boy in the world. O.K., God, if you don't show yourself, I'll never believe in you. O.K., I warned you. I'm a take the Virgin Mary and tie her up, put her in a brown paper bag, and if you ever wanna see your mother you'll do what I tell you."

At this point, hilariously, Miggy starts to rise into the flies. "I was only playing!" he shouts as he goes higher and higher. "Why do you have to take everything so serious, Mean Head?" As he disappears from sight, Miggy bleats one parting shot at his unpredictable God: "I didn't say nothing." But Leguizamo has said a lot. This last image of comic resurrection, like everything in the production, meticulously developed and expertly directed by Peter Askin, is both a boffo payoff and a prophecy. Up and up is just where Leguizamo is going. And "Spic-O-Rama," with its rich, rare blend of bitterness and joy, adds new *sabor* to American theatre, showing a way for our drama to embrace the darkness in the democracy and still be sensational. If our theatre has a future, it is this new energy and new multiracial voices like Leguizamo's that are going to make it happen. ♦

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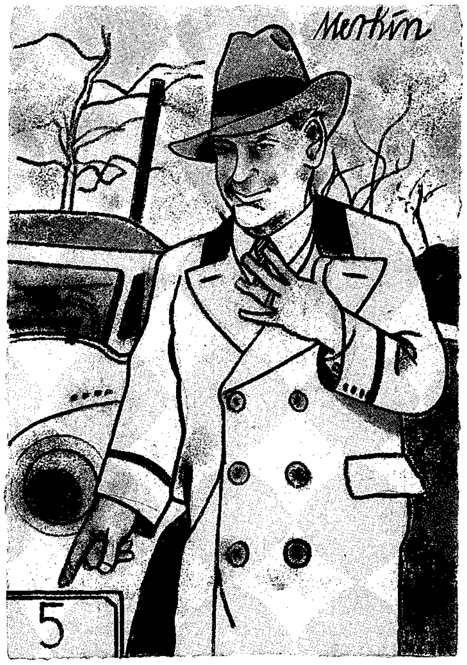
BOOKS

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

by Richard Brookhiser

JAMES MICHAEL CURLEY, congressman, governor, four times mayor of Boston, and twice a jailbird, has not lacked for chroniclers. He was a public figure for over half a century. (His first election was in 1897, his last in 1956.) In his old age, he was the subject of a biography and an autobiography, as well as being the model for Frank Skeffington, the hero of Edwin O'Connor's elegy for the urban Irish pol, "The Last Hurrah." The book-length accounts of Curley's life smoothed and flattened him, however, turning the man who had been viewed as either a hero or a villain during his active career into an intermediate thing, a "rascal"—a term that is always used with a wink. Curley had charm, and even some virtues, and Jack Beatty's new biography, "The Rascal King" (Addison-Wesley; $25), is alive to them all. But, despite his book's title, Beatty also wants to remind us of Curley's gamy side, and in doing so he suggests its continuing relevance to politics in the age of the sound-bite.



James Curley: Other Boston pols deployed the same combination of carrot and stick, though seldom as effectively.

RICHARD MERKIN

Curley was born in 1874, in Ward 17, a Boston neighborhood that would make Hope, Arkansas, look like Hobe Sound. His father, an immigrant who worked eleven-hour days as a hod carrier, burst a blood vessel on the job and died when James was ten. His mother supported the family by scrubbing floors. James finished the ninth grade, then entered the labor market full time, first as a worker in a piano factory, then as a teamster.

He was able to leave the labor market when he discovered politics. Politics was one of the Irish Catholic roads to success in America, because the Irish, unlike other immigrant groups, had no language barrier to overcome, and the sociability and the aptitude for control which made them successful in banking and in the American Catholic Church, respectively, were useful in wooing supporters and holding them in line. Curley attached himself to a local Democratic club, bought a second-hand cutaway coat, and, in 1897, started running for office. (He succeeded on his third try.) In 1902, he founded a club of his own, the Tammany Club—a name that, as Beatty says, "bristled with affront," since New York's Tammany Hall was then going through a scandalous patch. Two years later, he himself bristled by serving his first jail sentence. Curley and a fellow club member took the Civil Service exam for two young immigrants who wanted to be postmen, and were sentenced to two months in prison. Explaining to his constituents that he "did it for a friend," Curley was elected alderman while the conviction was being appealed, and reëlected while he was behind bars.

Favors were the glue of Curley's politics. He steered supporters to jobs, either on the public payroll or in the employ of friendly businessmen, often contractors; in emergencies, his organization would spring for groceries. Early on in Curley's career, some do-gooder college students from Cambridge opened a settlement house in Ward 17, but abandoned it when they concluded that the Tammany Club was already doing effective social work. Curley augmented his electoral base by means of trickery. For a few dollars on Election Day, a grateful constituent might be induced to vote several times. Supporters of rival candidates received mailings directing them to the wrong polling places. Curley drove John Fitzgerald, John F. Kennedy's grandfather, from one mayoral race by threatening to expose his affection for a cigarette girl known as Toodles Ryan, and he assailed John Murphy, a rival in another mayoral contest, by spreading the story—false, in this case—that Murphy was a Mason and had been seen eating a steak at the Copley-Plaza on a Friday. The dishonest endorsement could be as deadly as the dishonest attack: Curley's minions canvassed Catholic South Boston for Murphy while posing as members of a Baptist church club.

Other Boston pols deployed the same mixture of carrots and sticks, though seldom as effectively. A third quality of Curley as a politician—one that was unique to him—was his style. Curley worked hard on his speaking, taking eight years of elocution lessons, from which he emerged with what one journalist called a "magnetic and mellifluent larynx"; another, a drama critic, classed his vocal skills with Laurence Olivier's and Tallulah Bankhead's. Curley gave his golden instrument golden syllables to sound, modelled on Shakespeare, Disraeli, and Daniel Webster; he loved, Beatty says, "the big word, the busy sentence, the convoluted paragraph," and Beatty offers several luxuriant cuttings. He varied his elaborate and artificial eloquence with a bark-on wit, like a kid bouncing a spaldeen off a wall of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Beatty describes the most famous instance, when Curley, who had left a fur coat in a car at a rally, interrupted a sonorous rendition of the Lord's Prayer by inserting an order between "forgive us our trespasses" and "as we forgive those who trespass against us": "Get that sonuvabitch, he's stealing my coat!" Curley made the grand manner a life style as well as a literary style. During his first term as mayor, he built a neo-Georgian mansion with gold-plated light fixtures, marble fireplaces, a mahogany-panelled dining room, and a three-story spiral staircase—all on a salary of ten thousand dollars a year.

The high point of Curley's political career on the national scene came in the middle of his third term as mayor, when he backed Franklin D. Roosevelt for the 1932 Democratic Presidential nomination. This was heresy among Irish-Americans, because Al Smith, their hero and the Party's 1928 nominee, wanted another try. Massachusetts Democrats were so outraged by Curley's treachery that they refused to elect him to the state delegation to the Convention, whereupon he got himself credentialled as a delegate from Puerto Rico. Curley did not personally profit from his farsightedness, however. Roosevelt refused to make him Secretary of the Navy or Ambassador to Italy, eventually offering to make him Ambassador to Poland instead. "If Poland is such a goddam interesting place," asked Curley, "why don't you resign the Presidency and take it yourself?"

The low point of his career should have come in 1947, when he spent five more months in jail, convicted of mail fraud for lending his name to a shyster brokerage firm that claimed to help small businesses get federal contracts. Curley said he hadn't known what was going on, and even today some students of the case believe him. Bostonians either believed him or didn't care, for they elected him to his fourth term as mayor while he was under indictment.

That was the last time he held office. When Bostonians finally tired of him, their reasons were cultural as much as political: by mid-century, the larynx, and the hangers-on with nicknames like Up-Up and Knocko, had begun to be embarrassing. Deprived of power, Curley became an object of sentiment. In 1956, the old man won his last race, to be among the delegates sent by Boston to the Democratic Convention. If the ballots marked "Skeffington" had been added to his total, he would have outpolled Jack Kennedy. When he died, two years later, a hundred thousand people filed past his casket.

Beatty is of two minds about Curley's economic record. The slogan of his last successful mayoral campaign, the next-to-last hurrah, was "Curley gets things done," and he did do a lot for Boston, building roads, bridges, parks, hospitals. He also called for a universal old-age pension and a national planning board to insure "economic justice"—a phrase, Beatty writes admiringly, as heretical in the nineteen-twenties, when Curley used it, "as it would be in the 1980s." But Beatty also shows us how Curleyism was funded, and the picture is not pretty. Curley habitually awarded municipal contracts to high bidders, who rewarded him with kickbacks; this was how he got rich. He financed his bloated budgets by ruinous taxes on downtown real estate, which ultimately made Boston poor. "I never took a quarter from anyone who couldn't afford it," he once told a reporter. Maybe not directly, but in the end all Bostonians' pockets were lightened by what Beatty calls "the overhead of Curleyism."

Beatty is less ambivalent about Curley's notorious ethnic politicking. Curley was a gleeful Wasp-basher, whose rhetoric when he was on an anti-Yankee roll makes "The Late George Apley" look like a puff: "female faddists, old gentlemen with disordered livers . . . gabbing spinsters and dog-raising matrons in federation assembled." Unitarians, he once declared, were "a curious sect who seem to believe that our Lord Jesus was a young man with whiskers who went around in his underwear." This, of course, was paying off old scores in Boston's bruising ethnic wars, but Beatty reminds us how old the scores were. The generation of Irish politicians and clerics which preceded Curley's had adopted Wasp mores, in return for toleration and political advancement. (Boston elected its first Irish mayor in 1884, when Curley was ten.) Curley raked up old animosities in order to solidify a political base and distract attention from his own thieving. When a Yankee neighbor complained about an architectural detail of the house the kickbacks built, Curley claimed he was being attacked for the shamrock cutouts in the shutters.

At the end of the day, Curleyism was hollow, even on its own terms. Curley gave Bostonians favors and sinecures instead of wealth, and grudges and flattery instead of pride. The secret fear haunting "The Rascal King," and reflected in its wobbling judgments of its subject, is that Curleyism may be not a grotesque ethnic deviation from the practice of twentieth-century politics but a legitimate example of it. Curley's "type of politician paved the way for the issueless desert of today's television campaigns," Beatty writes at one point. "In 'The Last Hurrah,' Edwin O'Connor sets Skeffington's ineffably noble personal politics against the phony TV ads of his opponent, but that is a projection of nostalgia, for the two modes of politics were equally lacking in ideological or issue-based substance." Yet that is not fair to Curley: he had an issue besides tribal warfare, and, moreover, one that Beatty endorses—economic justice. He had genuinely generous impulses—even, as one of his children put it, toward people "who really didn't deserve it"—but no coherent notion of how generosity might be administered by the state. Although present-day proponents of economic justice typically do not steal for themselves in the way that Curley did, they have been no better than he was at explaining the principles determining who should get their benefactions, and why, and who should pay for them, and how. Every four years, politicians try to patch up the tattered case. Walter Mondale reaffirmed the primacy of need; Michael Dukakis stressed competence; even George Bush promised to be kinder and gentler. Now Bill Clinton offers the New Covenant. If he wins, we will see whether he has as much success intellectually as he, and Curley, have had at the polls. ♦

An intensive study of the poems of the two major Victorian poets, including their long poems—Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Browning's *The Ring and the Book.* We will compare these two poets, considering developments in their thought and form and connecting these developments to the ideas and social problems of the age. Class discussion will be encouraged.

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Mummy's, an Egyptian restaurant in Portland, Ore.

Rumple Shirt Skins, a haberdashery in Whistler, B.C., Canada.

AFTERWORD

Over the years, if there is any false witness to be borne, William F. Buckley, Jr., can usually be counted on to gaily shoulder the burden. But now Paul Berman, your book reviewer, outdoes him (October 12th). Apropos of Buckley's "In Search of Anti-Semitism," he tells us that in *The Nation* (in 1986) I "described neoconservative American Jews as un-American foreigners (in the course of making a further argument, similarly dim-witted, that white people ought to unite against the 'Yellow Peril')." This sentence should be filed under Department of Total Confusion. First, there were not one but two pieces. In 1985, in a speech for PEN, I noted that the white race would soon comprise sixteen per cent of the world's population. I also passed on what was then news: the United States was for the first time since 1914 a debtor nation. I proposed that the two great powers of the Northern Hemisphere, Russia and the United States, unite in order to counterbalance Asia's economic hegemony. Seven years later, this is beginning to happen—much too slowly, I'm afraid. Buckley almost got this straight when he wrote that I had urged "the white races of the world . . . to band together to meet the economic challenge of the yellow races by calling off the silly cold war that divided us." The key word here is "economic." I made no mention of the Yellow Peril, only China and Japan. Buckley neglected to record my warning that because of the historic bigotry and imperialism of the *white* race we are much hated around the world and I only hoped that Japan and China, in their glory, would treat us better than we had treated them in ours.

When my speech was printed in *The Nation* (January 11, 1986), alarm bells went off. Several "neoconservatives" struck. I was told, by some mysterious logic, that I hated my country. I replied (*The Nation*, March 22, 1986) that I quite liked my country but didn't much care for Israel, for which they made constant propaganda while, mischievously, exacerbating the Cold War to keep the money flowing to "our only friend in the Middle East" against the Russian hordes. By carefully rewriting me, they then turned my censure of a few dozen neocons into an indictment of all American Jews. Thus, I was called an "anti-Semite"—a phrase that no longer carries the slightest weight (alas), since these zealots will label almost anyone who favors, let us say, Israel's Peace Now movement an anti-Semite or a self-hating Jew. It is not wise to play with such fire in so dry a season. Certainly it is not useful for your reviewer to paraphrase—dim-wittedly?—yet another paraphrase, itself steeped in bad faith.

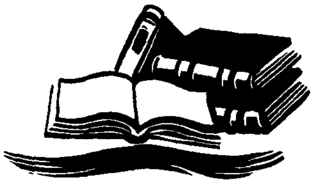
GORE VIDAL

Paul Berman replies:

There have been many, many pieces by Gore Vidal, but the one I had in mind was "The Empire Lovers Strike Back," in *The Nation*, March 22, 1986. "The Empire Lovers" was not a succès d'estime. Vidal's call for the "white race" to unite against "more than one billion grimly efficient Asiatics" (both quotations from that one article) did seem clever and witty to some people, apparently. But I think a larger number judged that Vidal had written, in Irving Howe's careful phrase, "a racist diatribe."

Vidal says that several neo-conservatives rewrote his criticism of them to look like an attack on all American Jews. But, even without rewriting, this criticism of the several was fully as alarming, qualitatively speaking, as his quantitatively larger race crusade against more than a billion Asiatics. Vidal wrote that Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary*, having failed to display an interest in the Civil War, showed "he was not planning to become an 'assimilated American' "; and that Podhoretz and his wife, Midge Decter, belong to the "Israeli Fifth Column"—which is to say, are enemy agents, who "stay on among us, in order to make propaganda and raise money for Israel" from within "the host country." To Decter's comment that "Mr. Vidal does not like his country," Vidal replied, "Of course I like my country. . . . But now that we're really leveling with each other, I've got to tell you I don't much like your country, which is Israel." That did seem to reflect on more than several persons. American Jews ought to be able, after all, to adopt positions of their own choosing, including foolish and stupid—and even conservative, pro-Israel—positions without getting called Fifth Columnists.

Vidal's letter makes it sound as if the protests against these prejudices of his came only from the same evil handful who oppose the Israeli Peace Now movement, and as if he were, in consequence, the victim of a right-wing gang-up. Not so. The gang-up is left wing, too. Certain of Peace Now's leading American supporters were among the first to hoot him down, as was natural. For the whole style of Vidal's harping on the white race and un-American Jewish plots has the cranky sound that even William F. Buckley, Jr., when hearing it on the extreme right, knows to warn against with the timely notice "Ezra Pound Slept Here." Whatever else can be said about Vidal—witty? witless? half-witted?—the bee in his bonnet flags not.



BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

The President's Child
by Fay Weldon (Penguin; $10)

“ONCE you have felt love . . . you do not feel competitive any more: you do not believe you will be loved, or not loved, because your make-up is right or wrong. You do not worry because your breasts are small, or your hair greasy. . . . You know that all these things are trivial, that love strikes in spite of them.” This is the exceptional book that brazenly asserts the primacy of private affairs, like love, over public; politics are dismissed as “men's games.” But politics might kill Isabel, who loved a senator, secretly bore his son, and is in danger because the bachelor father's sleazy handlers regard potential news of the romance as threatening to his Presidential hopes. Isabel is a famous talk-show host, married to a man inclined toward housework. She shares a world of comforts with a cozy group of female neighbors, which, however, always holds sinister undercurrents from the world of external affairs—both kinds. The British Weldon gets some minor Americanisms wrong here, but she gets absolutely everything in the moral and emotional universe brilliantly, emphatically, and entertainingly right.

Leviathan
by Paul Auster (Viking; $21)

WHEN a small item about a mysterious man's death by homemade bomb appears in the *Times*, the narrator of this engrossing book knows instantly that the man was his best friend, Benjamin Sachs, an iconoclastic novelist and essayist who has been missing for several years. But when the F.B.I. comes to question him he keeps Sachs's identity to himself. Then he shuts himself up in his studio and begins writing. He is the caretaker of Sachs's explosive secrets, and for his own peace of mind he wants to spell them out somewhere, before the F.B.I. catches on. It turns out that, like his lost friend, he's a novelist, and Sachs's story is one of those stranger-than-fiction tales that deserve to be written. Although we know Sachs's fate from the first page, the roundabout, elaborate way Mr. Auster works up to it is gripping, and sometimes frightening. Sachs's life—and, by extension, the narrator's—is a web of eerie coincidences. An address book dropped in the street, a truck passing on a deserted road, the particular combination of strangers on a Brooklyn fire escape at a party: these are the determining factors that leave one of them bereft but intact and the other a dead man.

GENERAL

African Laughter
by Doris Lessing (HarperCollins; $25)

THIS wise and vivid book records the author's travels in Zimbabwe during the last decade. As Lessing fans will recall, her family moved to what was then Southern Rhodesia when she was five, and their farm shaped her sense of the natural world. Alienated from white-settler society, she went to England in 1949, and soon found herself barred from returning, even to visit, because she opposed Ian Smith's white-minority government. The ban was lifted when the whites capitulated and Southern Rhodesia became Zimbabwe. Her voyages are both rediscovery and discovery: she learns what has become of once familiar places and what is happening in an independent African state. Her insight into and sympathy for human beings of both races and all conditions is persuasive and affecting; she embeds Zimbabwe's economic and social problems in everyday reality, in the lives of individual Africans struggling with innovation and disaster. At once hopeful and critical but never argumentative, Lessing is an intelligent well-wisher.

Rising in the West: The True Story of an “Okie” Family from the Great Depression Through the Reagan Years
by Dan Morgan (Knopf; $25)

JOHN SINGER SARGENT once said that an artist painting a picture should have at his side a man with a club to hit him over the head when the picture was finished. The author of this book could have benefitted from the same kind of editorial assistance. He begins with the absorbing story of an Okie family forced by the hardships of the Great Depression to flee their home and seek a better fortune in fabled “Californy.” Oca Tatham is twenty-three years old and the father of two when the family embarks in its 1929 Chevy truck for the promised land. In California, Oca improves himself, first by shrewd dealing in junk, then as a trucker and truck-fleet owner, and then as a real-estate developer, eventually becoming a wealthy man. This history, and that of various Tatham brothers, wives, and children, reads like a first-rate novel until, about halfway through, we get bogged down in Oca's religious and political beliefs—the Tathams are devout Pentecostals—and his friendships with such Christian true believers as Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Jimmy Swaggart. Extended discussion of these matters, along with chunks of information on the lives and careers of distant Tatham kin, cries out for the man with the club.

American Gothic: The Story of America's Legendary Theatrical Family—Junius, Edwin, and John Wilkes Booth
by Gene Smith (Simon & Schuster; $23)

A COLLECTIVE biography of a father and two sons—all neurotics (Junius, the father, may have been crazy), all alcoholics (though Edwin eventually became a teetotaller), and all great actors, whose careers, spanning the nineteenth century, compose a history of the American theatre in their time. Junius was born in London in 1796 and came to the United States in 1821, and his abilities were immediately recognized. Some of his eccentricities were endearing, but others were alarming and self-destructive. Edwin, born in 1833, was taken out of school and sent on tour to keep his father sober and sane. Edwin reached New York in the eighteen-fifties; he brought both depth and refinement to his performances, and became the idol of the masses and the darling of intellectuals. John Wilkes Booth was not only a good actor; he was amiable, gregarious, and astonishingly good-looking, and no one who knew him could picture him as Lincoln's assassin. Mr. Smith, a brisk popular historian, does justice to lively show-business stories as well as to the melodrama of John's deed and his wretched death. ♦

SHOUTS AND MURMURS

FIRST TUESDAY

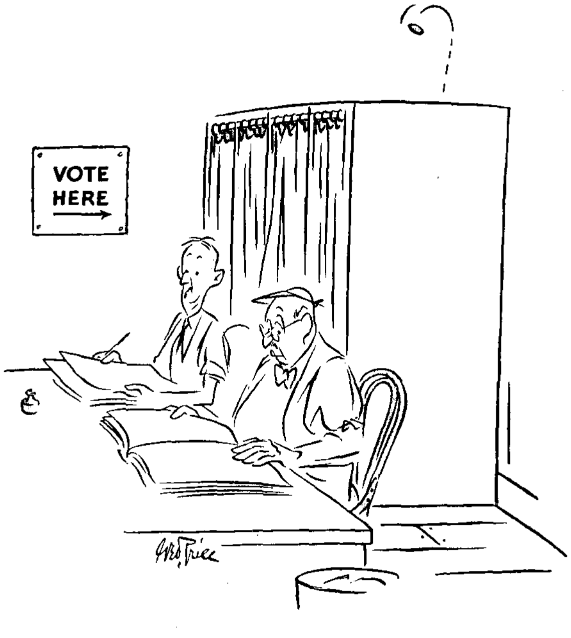
by Roger Angell

I VOTE at the uptown Y, on Lexington Avenue, which I visit otherwise only for the occasional string quartet or poetry reading. Voting, like uplift, encourages boredom and a sense of high purpose within me, and turns the trick, I've noticed, better than Beethoven or Brodsky. At the Y, nothing has changed. Around the room, the machines' shabby curtains snap open and bang shut; the vestal poll-watchers bend low over their thick volumes; and once again I have forgotten the number of my assembly district. Redirected, I sign my name above an amazing column of perfect prior replicas, in various inks: my straight A's in civics. I get in line and, for this once, don't mind its length or slowness. Inside at last, I flip the pleasing levers and then check my "X"s one more time; it's all done so quickly that I linger a moment longer, examining the unfamiliar names and parties over on the less populated part of the display, and marvelling at such zeal and hope. Then I grab the lever, record myself with a manly fling, and walk out, shriven, to go to work. All that day—it never fails—I am pervaded by a sense of calm, dumb goodness: exactly the way I used to feel after church, on Sundays long ago.

A woman I once met in London said that she had been a friend of Bertrand Russell's, and told me that she had last seen him at a luncheon one day, late in his very long life. Forehandedly, she had come up with a question for the great man, which she put to him over the soup. She reminded him that he was not only the world's best-known atheist but now also perhaps the world's oldest atheist. What would he say, she wanted to know, if, when the moment came, it turned out that he had been wrong all this time and now found himself standing outside the Pearly Gates? Russell's eyes lit up, she told me, and he responded with eagerness. "Why, I should say," he cried, in his high, thin voice, "I should say, 'God, you gave us insufficient evidence!' "

I bring this up here because Lord Russell's reply expresses almost exactly the way I feel about the democratic process these days. I have fallen a long way from the hot certainties of my twenties and thirties, when I would argue politics with my friends and family by the hour and the day and the night, convinced of their error and quite sure that my knowledge of world and national events, and of how this senator and that representative had come down on various issues, would clear their hearts and minds and bring them to the light. I fired off burning letters to my congressman and dialled Western Union before bedtime with still another telegram to the White House. No more. I have no wish to sort out here what happened to me, what happened to us all, when our politics went onto the tube, for we know that story by heart. We are consumers of politics now, and hardly participants at all. If President Bush represents God in this transposed parable, then I see his image everywhere—not just in Republican election commercials but in his televised news conferences and in speeches and declarations and photo opportunities—but find insufficient evidence that he exists at all in relation to me, a voter. And what has faded as well is not just belief in my President but my faith in the godlike powers I once believed we all possessed, which would allow us someday, after immense struggles, to solve some of our common problems. That has almost gone, I'm sorry to say, and it's a greater loss.

Almost. I am not as strong and clear as Bertrand Russell (who is?), and I sometimes sense that there remains a wishful warm spot inside me, a stubborn coal, that keeps me from absolute doubt about this ancient, worn-down system, or from cold cynicism about some other surviving liberties. On the morning after Election Day, I will read the *Times* at length, finding gloom or cheer in the returns, and then I'll search out the totals in the Presidential balloting, and, over to the right in my candidate's column, count the millions of votes there, down to the very last number. "That's me!" I will whisper, and, at the moment, perhaps feel once again the absurd conviction that that final number, the starboard digit, is something—go figure—I would still die for, if anyone cared. ♦



FROM THE NEW YORKER, NOVEMBER 5, 1988

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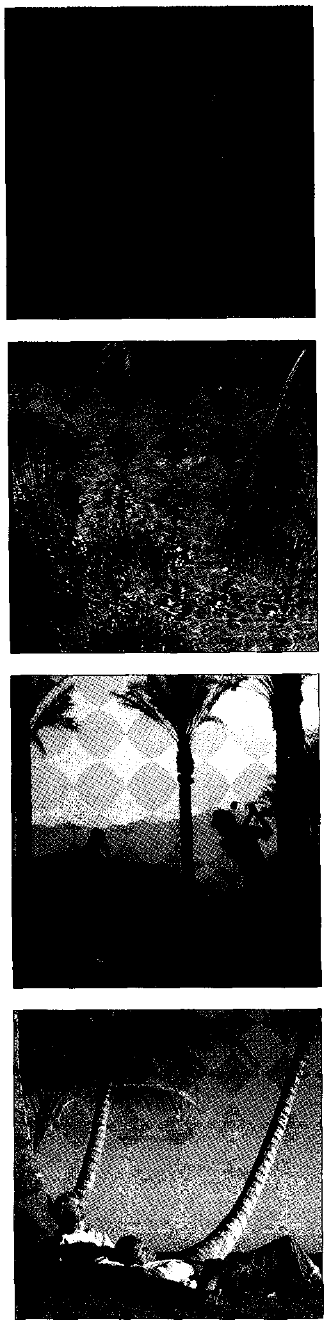

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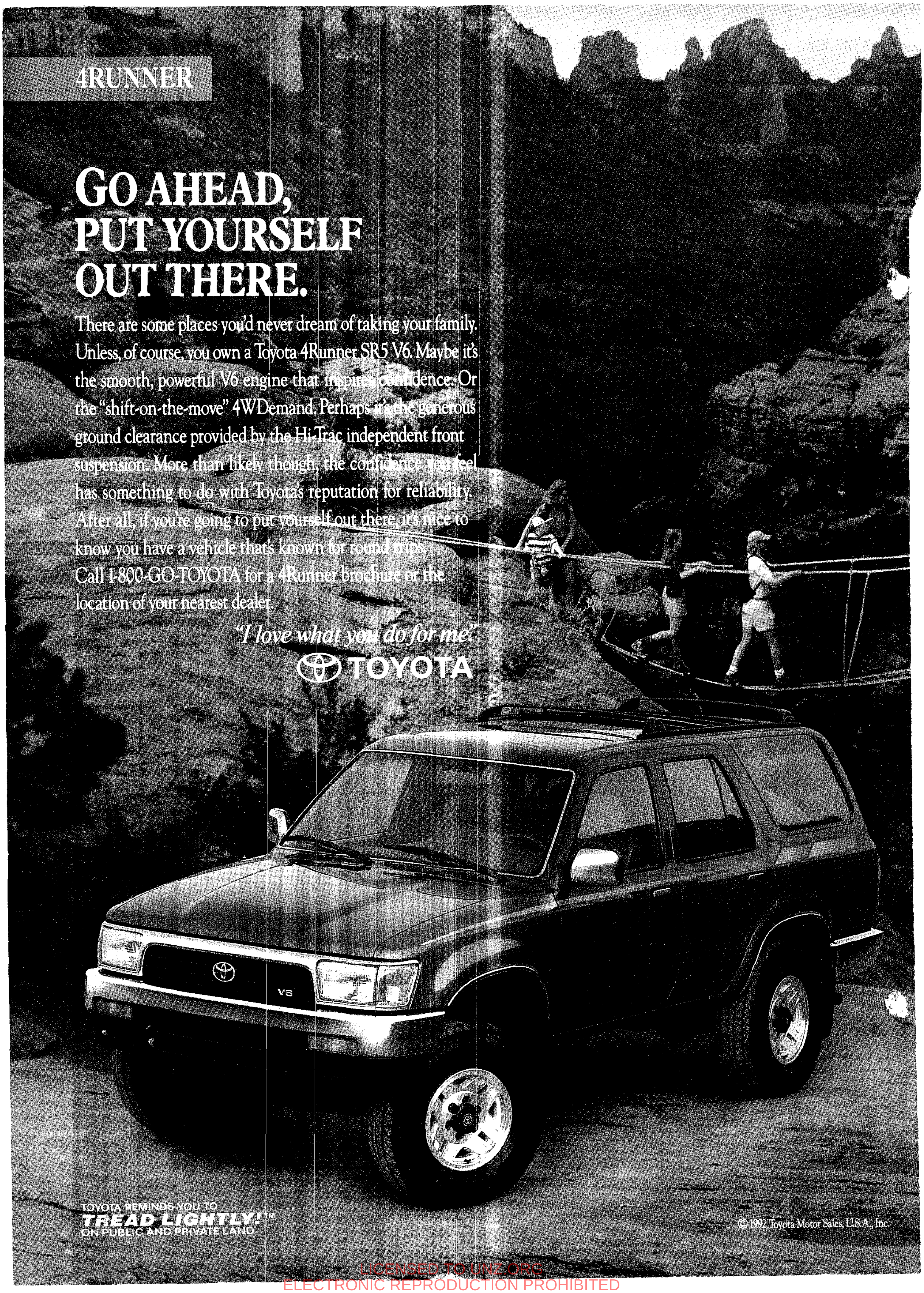

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